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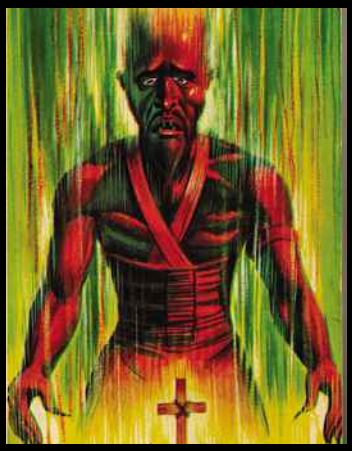

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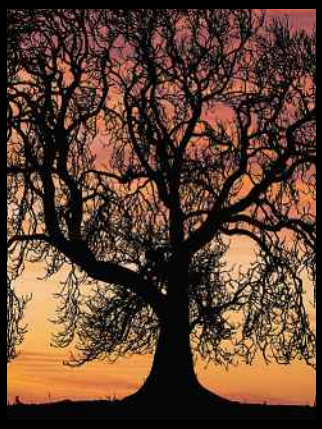

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editorial

Well, here we are again...

END OF THE WORLD NEWS

Stories of doomsday panic in the lead-up to 21 December 2012 continued to appear in the world's media as we neared the year's end.

From Russia came reports of "collective mass psychosis" in a women's prison near the Chinese border, where inmates were apparently so distressed that a priest was summoned to try and calm them down. "Once, when the prisoners were standing in formation, one of them imagined that the Earth yawned, and they were all stricken by fear and ran in all directions," the father in question told newspapers.

Panic buying of food and fuel was said to have taken place in other parts of Russia, with people in one area said to be stockpiling candles after a Tibetan monk had warned of an impending period of darkness. An entrepreneur in the Siberian city of Tomsk was doing a brisk trade in 'End of the World' Emergency Kits. They contained such essentials as vodka and soap and bore the typoically mordant Russian motto: "It can' t be worse."

The Russian government stepped in, with its "minister of emergency situations" saying that he had access to "methods of monitoring what is occurring on the planet Earth" and could rule out any December apocalypse; there might, though, still be problems with "blizzards, ice storms, tornadoes, floods, trouble with transportation and food supply, breakdowns in heat, electricity and water supply." (*New York Times, 1 Dec 2012*)

Meanwhile, New Agers, UFO nuts and other assorted loons continued to gather in and around the French village of Bugarach, causing more headaches for its long-suffering mayor – although bringing considerable extra income to the area's more enterprising businesses. One restaurant was offering 'Apocalypse Pizza', which could be washed down with a local winemaker's 'End of the World' vintage. Local press reports claimed that a local landowner was offering to rent out his four-bedroom house on the slopes of Bugarach for 1,500 euros a night and offering camping in a nearby field for 400 euros.

In early December, the local authorities announced that access to the mountain would not be allowed on 21 December. Eric Freysselinard, the state's top representative in the area, said he was blocking access to the mountain for public safety reasons to avoid a rush of New Age fanatics, sightseers and media crews. The mayor had banned 'gatherings' in the immediate area of the mountain and local police were ready to arrest anyone who attempted to land in a light aircraft. (*AFP, 17 Nov; D. Mail 3 Dec; D. Telegraph, 6 Dec, 2012*)

The Pic de Bugarach wasn't the only mountain in Europe to attract the doomsdayers. Mount Rtani in Serbia attracted its own End of the World crowd, who apparently intended to sit out the apocalypse in a specially constructed bunker built long ago by an alien race within the mountain itself. (*Gather.com, 10 Dec 2012*)

Of course, the big question is: what happens next? Will the doomsday believers simply pack up and go home, or will these modern millenarians do what so many of their predecessors have done and reset the date for the End of the World? We'll be bringing you a special report later in the year, once the apocalyptic dust has settled, looking at all of the fall-out from 21/12/12.

"No, that's Greyfriar's Benny - his owner was a right old sod"

MARTIN ROSS

RIGHT ROYAL ALIENS

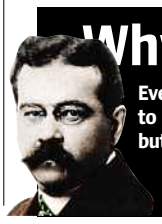
The links between the British establishment and the UFO phenomenon have been explored on numerous occasions within these pages, but we felt we had to share the following little Royal tidbit. In the new volume of the late Queen Mother's letters (*Counting One's Blessings*, ed. William Shawcross), we find the following amusing missive to a courtier:

"I would love to hear Shane Leslie' s son [Desmond Leslie, see **FT225:40-47**] lecture on Flying Saucers… I adore hearing about the glorious god-like beings that step out and converse so sweetly with strangers. It's such an amusing madness, and has grown to such beautiful proportions, and what is extraordinary too, is that the people from Venus are so NICE!"

DAVID SUTTON

BOB RICKARD

PAUL SIEVEKING


Why fortean?
Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!
SEE PAGE 76

A Startling Memory Feat That YOU Can Do!

"How I learned the secret in one evening. It has helped me every day."

When my old friend Richard Faulkner invited me to a dinner party at his house, I little thought it would be the direct means of doubling my salary in less than two years. Yet it was, and here is the way it all came about.

Towards the end of the evening things began to drag a bit as they often do at parties. Finally someone suggested the old idea of having everyone do a 'party-piece'. Some sang, others forced weird sounds out of the piano, recited, told stories and so on.

Then it came to Peter Brown's turn. He said he had a simple 'trick' which he hoped we would like. First he asked to be blindfolded. Those present were to call out 25 random numbers of three figures each, such as 161, 249, and so on. He asked me to list the numbers in order as they were called.

Peter then astounded everyone by repeating the entire list of 25 numbers backwards and forwards. Then he asked people to request numbers by their position in the list, such as the eighth number called, the fourth number and so on. Instantly he repeated back the correct number in the positions called. He did this with the entire list – over and over again without making a single mistake.

Then Peter asked someone to shuffle a deck of cards and call them out in order. Still blindfolded he instantly named the cards in their order backwards and forwards.

You may well imagine our amazement at Peter's remarkable memory feat.

"There was really nothing to it – simply a memory feat"

On the way home that evening I asked Peter Brown how it was done. He said there was really nothing to it — simply a memory feat. Anyone could develop a good memory, he said, by following a few simple rules. And then he told me exactly how to do it.

What Peter said I took to heart. In one evening I made remarkable strides towards improving my memory. In just a few days I learned to do exactly what he had done.

"I can instantly recall anything I want to remember"

I was fast acquiring that mental grasp and alertness I had so often admired in men who were spoken of as "brilliant" and "geniuses".

Then I noticed a marked improvement in my writing and conversational powers. What's more my salary has increased dramatically.

These are only a few of the hundreds of ways I have profited by my trained memory. Now I find it easy to recall everything I read. I can now master a subject in considerably less time than before. Price lists, reports, quotations, data of all kinds. I can recall in detail almost at will. I rarely make a mistake.

What Peter told me that eventful evening was this: "Send for details of Dr. Bruno Furst's Memory Course." I did. That was my first step in learning to do all the remarkable things I have told you about. In fact, I was so impressed that I got permission to publish Dr. Furst's Course myself.

BOB HEAP

"Dramatic Improvement"

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Mr. J.W. Sullivan, London S.W.2.

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strangedays

Serbian vampire returns

Local council warns villagers to put garlic on their doors as Sava Savanovic rises from the grave

An old ruined watermill said to have been the home of Serbia's most famous vampire has collapsed. According to legend, Sava Savanovic lived in the mill on the Rogacica river in Zarožje, a tiny hamlet in the municipality of Bajina Bašta, nestled between lush green mountain slopes and spooky thick forests near the Bosnian border. Here, Savanovic drank the blood of any farmer who came to mill grain. The small wooden building was bought by the local Jagodic family over 60 years ago. They were too scared to use it as a mill – but made a steady income from tourists, whom they let in but only during the hours of daylight. The family were worried about carrying out building work, lest they disturbed Savanovic or unleashed his wrath; but the result was that the mill collapsed a few months ago through lack of repair.

Some locals claim they can hear steps cracking dry forest leaves and strange sounds coming from the rocky mountain peaks where the vampire was purportedly killed with a sharp stake that pierced his heart – but managed to survive in spirit as a butterfly. "People are worried," Miodrag Vujetic, a local municipal assembly member, admitted. "Everybody knows the legend of this vampire and the thought that he is now homeless and looking for somewhere else and possibly other victims is terrifying people. We are all frightened."

He added that it was all very well for people who didn't live in the area to laugh at their fears, but he said nobody in the region was in any doubt that vampires exist. He confirmed that the local council had advised all villagers to put garlic on their doors and windows, as it was well known that vampires can't stand the smell. Vujetic added that villagers "are all taking precautions by having holy crosses and icons placed above the entrance to the house, rubbing our hands with garlic, and having a hawthorn stake or thorn." Villagers will have to be on their guard for several months, because local legend holds that vampires are most active between Christmas and the Feast of the Ascension on 7 June.

DARKO VOJINOVIC / AP / PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

ABOVE: The old watermill believed to have been Sava Savanovic's home. **OPPOSITE:** A billboard showing an illustration of the famous vampire.

"In the dark forested mountains of Serbia, Bosnia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Croatia, many people still believe in vampires and take them quite seriously," said Dr James Lyon, a noted Balkan historian and author of *Kiss of the Butterfly*, an historical thriller about vampires in Serbia. "In local folklore, vampires are not potential boyfriends. Rather, they are hideous, bloodthirsty creatures with red eyes and iron teeth that bloat when they feed, and are able to shift their shape."

> **"Vampires originated in Serbia, not Romania"**

Savanovic has maintained his notoriety in modern Serbia. He features in the 1880 story *Posle Devedeset Godina* ("After Ninety Years"), written by the Serbian realist writer Milovan Glišic, which inspired the 1973 horror film *Leptirica* ("Butterfly"), directed by Djorje Kadijevic and widely watched throughout all of former Yugoslavia. More recently, he appeared in the award-winning 2009 novel *Strah i njegov sluga* ("Fear and His Servant") written by Mirjana Novakovic.

The Balkans have long been Ground Zero for vampires when it comes to fanged folklore, with Serbia in the lead, according to Lyon. "Vampires originated in Serbia, not Romania," he said. "The word vampire entered western languages from Serbia in the late 1720s." Austrian forces returning from conquests in Ottoman Serbia brought back vampire stories, which circulated throughout Europe, later inspiring Byron, Keats and Coleridge. "In 1730-31 the Austrian Army sent a military surgeon into Serbia to conduct autopsies on suspected vampires. He and other Austrian Army officers wrote of their experiences, and these records still exist today," Lyon said.

Other famous vampire cases in Serbia include those of Arnold

INDIA'S UFO INVASION
Flying robot-like figure reported by multiple witnesses
PAGE 10

DEAD WELL DRESSED
Corpses get a new wardrobe when the dead are on display
PAGE 18

FLYING SAUCERY
How the US Air Force designed their very own space-age ship
PAGE 30

Paole and Peter Plogojowitz (see **FT288:44-48**). Paole, a soldier turned farmer, became a vampire after his death and went on to kill at least 16 people in his native village of Meduegna – or so it was said. The episode was the subject of a bestselling leaflet at the Leipzig book fair of 1732, written by two Austrian military doctors, Glaser and Flückinger. However, Paole's putative victims included two women who died of postpartum complications, their babies, and an old woman who probably died of old age.

Plogojowitz, a peasant from the village of Kisilova, died in 1785 at the supposed age of 62. Villagers asked the local civil servant for permission to exhume him after a spate of deaths preceded by short illnesses. He and a priest served as witnesses, and attested that Plogojowitz and his "victims" had failed to decompose in the way they would have expected. Bodies had stakes driven through the heart before being burned. In fact, all of the phenomena described are characteristic of corpses at certain stages of decomposition: ruddiness, non-coagulated blood escaping from orifices, and the peeling off of both nails and the outer layers of skin. It was through the report into the Plogojowitz case by an Imperial civil servant, Provisor Frombald, that the word "vampire" first made its way out of its homeland and into a Viennese newspaper. The cases of Paole and Plogojowitz became famous because the Austrian authorities appeared to confirm that vampires did indeed exist.

DARKO VOJINOVIC / AP / PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES

The belief in blood-sucking entities, whatever name was given to them, has been widespread for centuries. Archæologists recently found 3,000 Czech graves, for example, where bodies had been weighed down with rocks to prevent the dead emerging from their tombs. Sometimes rocks are placed in the mouths of the dead, as found in Co Roscommon, Ireland [**FT283:18**] and in Venice [**FT249:18**]. A similar preventive measure was clamping the body to the ground with iron rods, as discovered in about 100 graves in Bulgaria [**FT291:20**] with others in neighbouring Serbia. The advent of Christianity only fuelled the legends, for the blood-suckers were considered the antithesis of Christ. Belief in such legends became so pervasive it caused mass hysteria in some areas and even public executions of alleged vampires.

D.Mail, 27 Nov; Good Morning America, 28 Nov; Deborah Hyde's blog in Notes & Theories (Guardian), 29 Nov; [AP] 3 Dec 2012.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

CHIP KILLS MAN IN CARE BUNGLE

Sun, 21 July 2012.

Policeman fired for cutting up President

<I>, 18 July 2012.

SEVERAL INJURED BY FALLING SHEEP IN ROAD CRASH

Independent, 2 June 2012.

Blood-sucking Caribbean parasite named after Bob Marley

MSN News, 12 July 2012.

Ark being inundated with cats

Southern Daily Echo, 30 June 2012.

Swedes expelled in teddy bear war

D.Telegraph, 9 Aug 2012.

MAN CLAIMS LEPRECHAUNS BEAT HIM UP FOR DANCING

Komo News (Seattle, WA), 19 June 2012.

Lions elect first woman president

North Somerset Mercury, 11 July 2012.

Beastie Boy bans use of his music in adverts from beyond the grave

Independent, 11 Aug 2012.

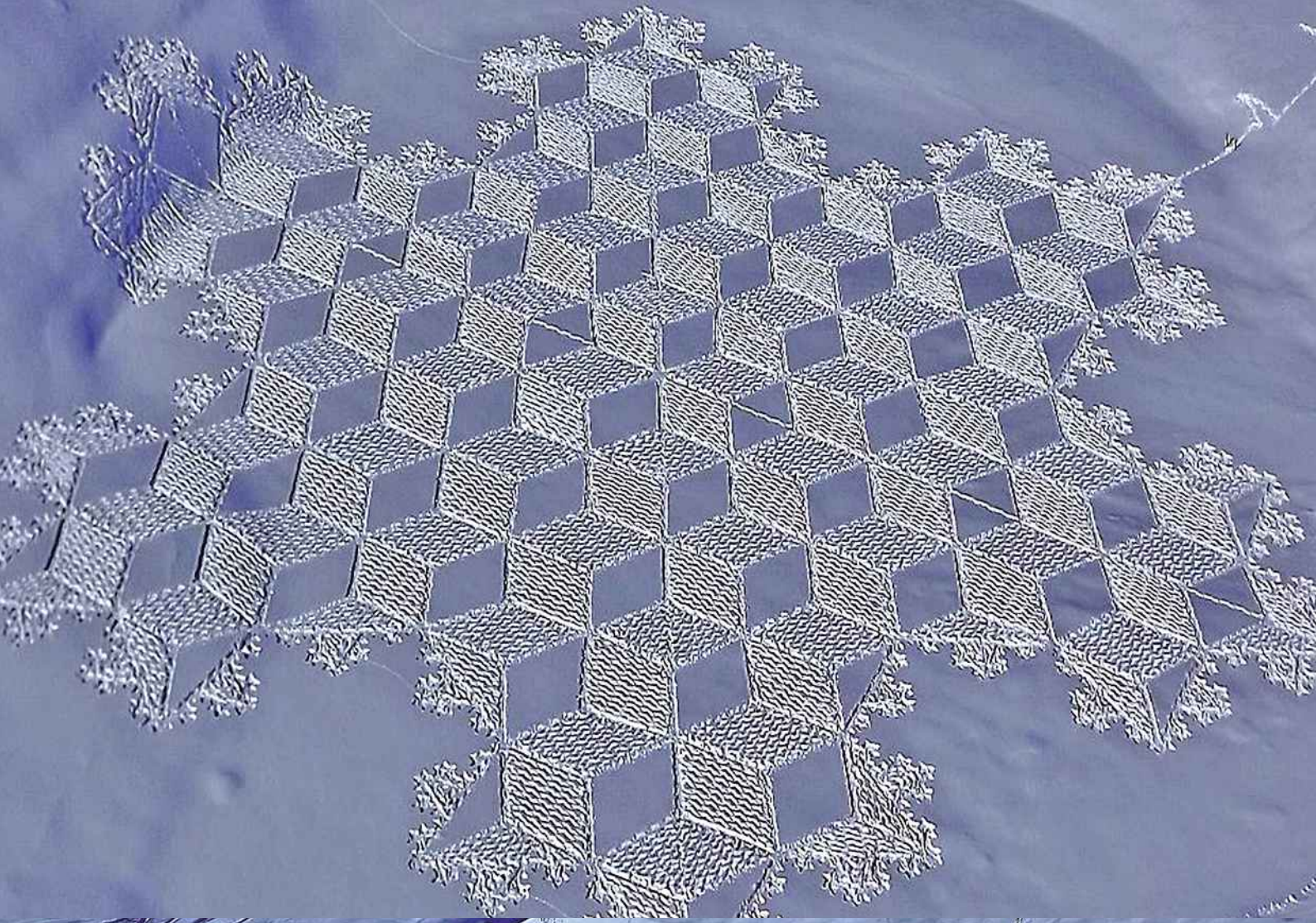
MAN BARRICADES HIMSELF IN HOTEL, DEMANDS PIZZA AND PARIS HILTON

WCNC News, –2012.

GOING ROUND IN (SNOW) CIRCLES

These incredible 'snow circles' are the work of English artist Simon Beck. The 54-year-old orienteer and map surveyor started creating his massive environmental artworks in 2004 at the popular skiing resort Les Arcs, France, after an injury to his feet meant he had to take a break from orienteering. He dons snowshoes to make these intricate large-scale patterns, which can take up to 10 hours of non-stop effort to create, sometimes working in the dark by the light of a headlamp. The huge geometric designs sometimes span the size of six or seven football pitches, but they are ephemeral creations which can be blown away by the mountain winds or covered by sudden snowfalls.

Beck's background in surveying and map-making has provided useful skills for marking and laying out the large-scale designs, while the high level of physical fitness required for actually making them comes from years of orienteering. Beck claims he has no artistic background or training, but did use a spirograph toy a lot as a child. At first, says Beck, the locals thought he was "a bit mad", but they have since come to see his creations as fantastic free advertising for the resort. *inhabitat.com, 26 Feb; D. Mail, 3 Sept; snoeshoemag.com, 11 Dec 2012*. To find out more about Simon Beck's snow art, visit his Facebook page: www.facebook.com/snowart8848.
PHOTOS: SIMON BECK



SIDELINES...

THE HOLY GOAT

Islam Bhati from Rajasthan in India has a goat with a fur pattern that resembles Koranic verses in Arabic. In October he was attempting to sell the animal for £130,500 to a family celebrating the Eid al-Adha festival. Bhati, 37, who runs the family's marble business, bought the goat two years ago. "I noticed the inscriptions soon after I bought him," he said. "I knew he was sacred." *MX News (Sydney), 29 Oct 2012.*

GAZA CROC

A crocodile living in sewers has terrorised residents in the Gaza Strip for more than two years. The 6ft (1.8m) croc living in Beit Lahiax probably escaped from a nearby zoo as a baby, according to Rajab al-Ankah, director of the Northern Gaza Sewage Station. He said it "slips out of the sewage basins to hunt for food and scurries back underground, evading captors." It has slaughtered livestock. *MX News (Sydney), 5 Nov 2012.*

BAD BEARS

A pair of sweet-toothed bears were on the run after breaking into the Ballard Bee Company's rural HQ in Washington State and stealing thousands of dollars' worth of honey. For other bear delinquency, see **FT294:28-29**. *Sunday Mercury, 21 Oct 2012.*

MARTIN ROSS

What's in a name?

Effin woman sticks up for profanity-laced place names

• The family history website ancestry.co.uk have combed through old school registers, marriage records and phone books for quirky names. The finds include Frank N Stein, Mary Scary from Norfolk (born in 1843), Fran Pire, a butcher who left New York for Southampton in 1926, a World War I soldier called Will Fright and a Southampton newsagent listed in a phone book as Mr Spooky. *Shropshire Star, 25 Oct 2012.*

• A couple of years ago, babywebsite.com trawled the UK's online phone records for the daftest names and came up with: Terry Bull, Tim Burr, Barry Cade, Mary Christmas, Chris Cross, Barb Dwyer, Ray Gun, Paige Turner, Hazel Nutt, Anna Sasin, Justin Case, Lee King, and Will Power. A similar trawl through US phone records produced: Bill Board, Carrie Oakey, Annette Curtain, and Anna Prentice. Retired airman Stan Still, of Cirencester, Gloucestershire, told the BBC: "My name has been a blooming millstone around my neck my entire life. When I was in the RAF my commanding officer used to shout: "Stan Still, get a move on!" and roll about laughing. It got hugely boring after a while." *telegraph.co.uk, 26 Feb; D.Mail, 27 Feb 2010.*

• After years of training, Vania Stambolova, 28, slipped at the first barrier in her 400m hurdles heat. The Bulgarian athlete crashed to the ground in an ungainly heap. She was unhurt, but lost too much time and walked away from the track. DNF (did not finish) was recorded next to her name on the official race card. *Metro, 7 Aug 2012.*

Facebook blacklisted the parish of Effin in Co Limerick

• A cannabis farm was discovered growing in Pot House Lane, Oswaldtwistle, Lancashire, on 9 August. Around 200 plants with lighting and cultivation equipment were seized from an upstairs bedroom of a farmhouse. *mirror.co.uk, 10 Aug 2012.*

• A Metropolitan police officer was arrested on suspicion of theft after property belonging to Scotland Yard went missing. His name? PC Robert Bent. *Western Mail (Cardiff), 28 Aug 2012.*

• A supercar with a registration that reads "write-off" nearly ended up as one on 5 September. The Audi R8 – whose number plate is R8 OFF – left a trail of destruction after the driver apparently lost control. Toys were flung into the air as the £100,000, 196mph motor skidded into a garden in Awbridge, near Romsay, Hampshire. The householder found the black limo empty. *Sun, 6 Sept 2012.*

• Fire destroyed a caravan in Rose Hill, St Blazey, Cornwall, during the early hours of 4 September in an apparent arson attack. Police were investigating. *Cornish Times, 7 Sept 2012.*

• Robin Hood, 24, got a community order after admitting stealing pizza from Iceland in Ramsgate, Kent. We are not told if he intended giving it to the poor. *Sun, 28 Sept 2012.*

• Virgin Media's profanity-blocking software caused some hilarity with *The Golden Age of Ca**ls* (Canals), *Manchester City v A***nal*, *Jarvis C**ker*, *Alfred Hitc**k*, *Never Mind the Buzzc**ks*, and a spoof "in the style of Charles D***ens". Previously, overzealous filters had banned Scunthorpe, Penistone, Lightwater, Sussex, and Essex. *Metro, 20 Dec; MX News (Sydney), 21 Dec 2011.*

• Facebook, the social networking website, blacklisted the parish of Effin in Co Limerick, Ireland, for having an obscene name. Ann Marie Kennedy was prevented from listing it as her hometown. "I'm a proud Effin woman," she said. *Mail on Sunday, 4 Dec 2011.*

• Belinda Batman from South Penrith, Cumbria, registered her Facebook account under her name in 2008, but in September 2012 was told she could no longer be registered because it was thought to be a fake name. Ironically, she had to use a genuinely fake name (Belinda XBatmanX) to keep her account open until she provided a copy of her driving licence. *(Sydney) D.Telegraph, 6 Oct 2012.*

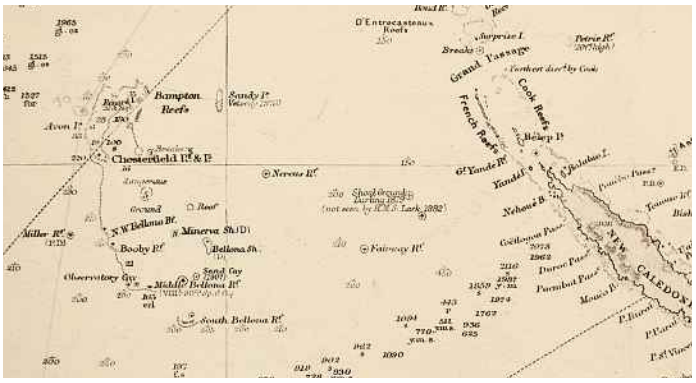
Pacific island vanishes

Island is not where it's marked, but maybe it's elsewhere

A South Pacific island identified on marine charts, Google Earth and world maps does not exist, according to Australian scientists. The island is supposedly midway between Australia and New Caledonia in the Coral Sea. It is named as Sandy Island on Google Earth, and measures about 15 miles (24km) by three miles (4.8km) on Google maps. Even *The Times Atlas of the World* recognises its existence, identifying it as Sable Island, and weather maps also confirm its position. It has also featured for the past 12 years on the world coastline database.

However, an Australian maritime research vessel called the RV *Southern Surveyor*, on a 25-day expedition to study plate tectonics and identify submerged fragments of the Australian continental crust, made a detour to the Manhattan-sized island after noticing that their navigation charts made no mention of it – but all they found was open sea. Dr Maria Seton, a geologist at the University of Sydney, said: "We wanted to check it out because the navigation charts on board the ship showed a water depth of 1,400 metres [4,620ft] in that area – very deep. We went to check and there was no island. We're really puzzled. It's quite bizarre. How did it find its way onto the maps? We just don't know." Had the island existed it would have belonged to France, since its location near the archipelago of New Caledonia is in French territorial waters. If real and emphatically Gallic, it would presumably have been called Île de Sable.

Shaun Higgins, a librarian at the Auckland Museum in New Zealand, delved into the museum's map collection to establish when and where the island first entered the Western imagination. The earliest mention was on a chart created by the Hydrographic Office of the British Admiralty in 1875 and last updated in 1908



(pictured above). This shows a lens-shaped island west of New Caledonia as depicted on Google Earth. It was already called Sandy Island and was designated as the 1876 discovery of a whaling ship named *Velocity* (although the ship's master had merely reported a series of "heavy breakers" and some "sandy islets"). R C Carrington, the chart's author, appended a caveat: "Caution is necessary while navigating among the low-lying islands of the Pacific Ocean. The general details have been collated from the voyages of various navigators extending over a long series of years. The relative position of many dangers may therefore not be exactly given." Subsequent cartographers seem to have disregarded his warning, as Sandy Island continued to appear on authoritative world maps for the next 136 years.

Some have speculated that it might have been intentionally invented by a cartographer as a copyright trap – urban cartographers are known to add so-called "paper streets" that don't actually exist so that plagiarists will reveal themselves by the inclusion of a signature error. However, Mike Prince, the director of charting services for the Australian Hydrographic Service, said that the authors of nautical charts didn't generally boobytrap their work, as such a practice could have had damning implications on sea maps' reliability.

While the Australian scientists who sailed through Sandy Island seem poised to be remembered as its true undiscoverers, its existence was ruled out in 2000 by a group of New Caledonian ham radio operators. The hobbyists had been interested in the remoteness of the Chesterfield Islands, an archipelago a few hundred miles from the New Caledonian mainland that was a candidate for a so-called DX-pedition, in which hams set up a communication point in an exotic and isolated locale. If Sandy Island had existed, the Chesterfield Islands would not have been sufficiently remote from another landmass to qualify as a viable DX-pedition destination; but the radio explorers deduced from satellite data on ocean depths that Sandy Island was indeed an island of the mind. On the other hand, Danny Dorling, president of the British Society of Cartographers, said: "It's unlikely someone made this island up. It's more likely that they found one and put it in the wrong location. I wouldn't be surprised if the island does actually exist, somewhere nearby." What's more, the world map is mutable, with new islands and archipelagos appearing following volcanic eruptions, and others disappearing in the same way. *[AFP] Guardian, 22 Nov; D.Telegraph, 23 Nov; LiveScience.com, 27 Nov 2012.*

SIDELINES...

MAGNETIC MAN

Sibin Ivanovic, 66, from the northern Serbian town of Jagodina, has become a magnet – reportedly for all things made of metal – after he was zapped with high voltage to restart his heart. "I'm hoping to have the same attractive effect on women," he said, "but probably only if they wear lots of jewellery." *Metro, 26 July 2012.*

FIERY FUN

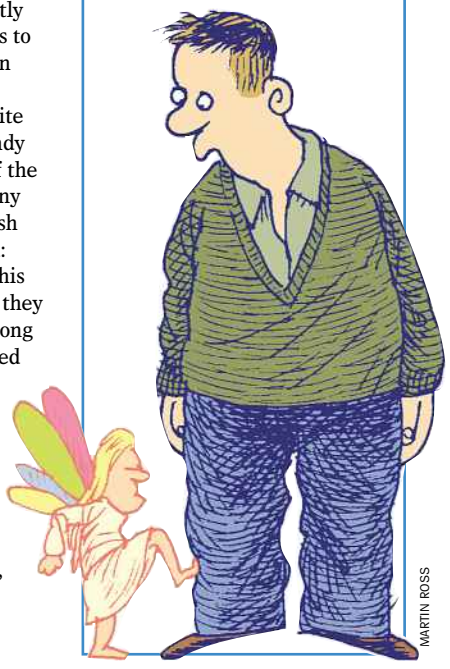
So much singed toast has been sent to the Museum of Burnt Food there's now a bread section with 2,000 exhibits. The collection in Arlington, Massachusetts, has 50,000 items from pizzas to potatoes. *Metro, 14 Aug 2012.*

DON'T ASK

A New Zealand man checked himself into A&E at an Auckland hospital with an eel stuck up his bottom. X-rays revealed the eel to be about 8in (20cm) long. A spokesman said it was "about the size of a decent sprig of asparagus". *MX News (Sydney), 25 Sept 2012.*

FAIRY STORY

A man called 999 to demand police protection after claiming he was being bullied by a fairy in Maidstone, Kent. *D.Star, 13 Nov 2012.*



MARTIN ROSS

SIDELINES...

FŒTUS MODELS

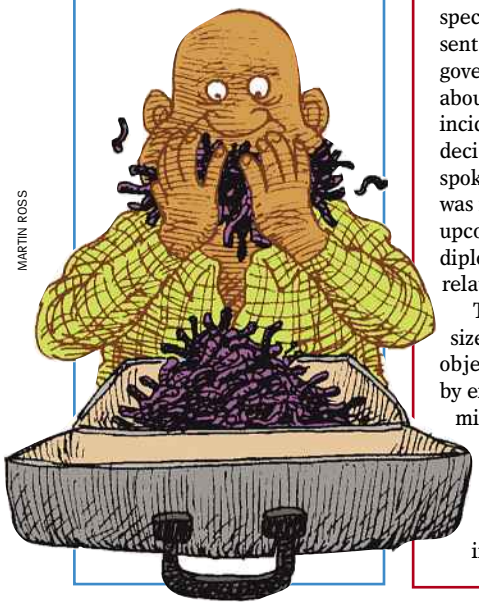
Using a "Bio-Texture" process, MRI scans, and three-dimensional printing technology, a clinic in Tokyo is offering parents-to-be the chance to hold their baby months before the child leaves the womb. The "Shape of an Angel" service costs about £800 (not including the cost of the MRI). *The Sideshow, 14 Aug 2012*.

SEVERE JUSTICE

A man who stole a mobile phone from a patient in an isolation ward in Uganda contracted the deadly Ebola virus from it. The patient reported the theft and died, and the thief returned to the hospital complaining of typical Ebola symptoms. *Wolverhampton Express & Star, 30 Aug 2012*.

BUG SMUGGLER

Adrian Onobanjo, 47, flying from Togo, West Africa, was stopped by boarder guards at Basel's EuroAirport in Switzerland and found to be carrying 33lb (15kg) of dead, black caterpillars concealed in plastic bags in a false-bottomed suitcase. He explained that he was addicted to them. According to a spokesman, "he grabbed as many as he could and started munching them. He said they were a delicacy and should not be wasted." The rest of the caterpillars were destroyed. *Sun, 24 Aug 2012*.



MARTIN ROSS

ALIENS OVER INDIA

ULOs ARE NOT EXTRATERRESTRIAL, SAY SCIENTISTS; CONSPIRACISTS DISAGREE

DANIEL BEREHULAK / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Ladakh's heavily militarised border with China could become a flashpoint if Indian soldiers were to fire at the wrong ULOs.

The subject of Unidentified Luminous Objects (ULOs) crossing the border from China into India has been discussed at "a high level meeting" in the Indian Prime Minister's office. Officials have stressed this is not out of credulity or public demand. Observations seem to show unusual "luminous objects" lifting off from the Chinese side and defying radar detection and spectrometer analysis by drones sent to intercept them. The Indian government is gravely concerned about the risk of an international incident "if Indian troops decide to shoot these objects," a spokesman said. The discussion was in preparation for an upcoming meeting with Chinese diplomats to review boundary-related security.

The bright "tennis-ball sized" and sometimes flashing objects have been observed by experienced science and military personnel stationed on the border in Ladakh. Although ULO sightings on the border date back at least a decade, they have increased in frequency to

Lights have been observed by military personnel

150 'events' between August and October 2012, according to a joint report by the Defence Research and Development Organisation and the Indian Army. The report is careful to distinguish the ULO sightings from regular identification of both manned and unmanned aircraft tracked by radar.

The Ladakh region of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir sits on the long border between Tibet and the Chinese-occupied province of Aksai Chin; a largely uninhabited but heavily militarised zone. On the Indian side, security is in the hands of the Indian Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force (ITBP), the main source of most of the recent reports. It was the increased number and persistent nature of the sightings by the ITBP in mid-2012 that convinced the Army's 14 Corps, based at Leh, to take the matter higher.

In late September 2012, a team of astronomers from the Indian Astronomical Observatory at Hanle managed to observe the airborne phenomena for three days. However, they could not reach any conclusion about their identity beyond saying that the objects were "non celestial" and were not meteors or planets. At the Ladakh outpost of Thakung, to the north of Hanle and close to the Pangong Tso Lake, one of these "yellowish spheres", with an "intense continuously flashing light", was in sight for around eight hours on 21 October. Three days earlier, a similar object was seen in the Dichu area of Arunachal Pradesh. Others have been observed for "three to five hours before disappearing".

Inter-service rivalry had unfortunately both clouded and stymied earlier debate. In late 2003, 14 Corps sent a detailed report to the Army headquarters about troops on posts along

the border at Siachen seeing "floating lights" on the Chinese side. During a northern command presentation in Leh, the then army chief, General NC Vij, angrily dismissed the sightings as hallucinations. In 2010, the Indian Air Force (IAF) probed and dismissed Army sightings of such luminous objects as "Chinese lanterns". Reacting to the recent reports, retired IAF Air Chief Marshal PV Naik said: "We can't ignore these sightings. We need to probe what new technology might have been deployed there."

Scientists are being cautious too. "There is no evidence of these 'UFOs' being of extraterrestrial origin," says Pune-based astrophysicist Jayant Narlikar. N Ratnashri, director of the Nehru Planetarium in New Delhi, suggested the ULOs might be some sort of balloon-like objects that reflect ambient light. As they are visible for a long period, she ruled out a meteor shower. Nor does she put much faith in photographs: "The shape could be anything," she said. "There's nothing to tell us there isn't extraterrestrial life, but nothing to tell us there is."

The Indian press, however, has had a field day with wild speculation based upon uncredited 'eye-witness' accounts and, inevitably, conspiracy theories. Gaurav Tiwari for one, founder of the Indian Paranormal Society, said the news seemed to reinforce rumours that the Indian Army "tolerates alien camps in the Himalayas"; but he couldn't confirm that as he was not able to investigate the area. "Earlier reports said the Indian government was in touch with aliens and was getting technology from them. It's all over the Internet," he said.

In contrast, there is still no explanation – scientific, political or otherwise – for what is believed to be the clearest 'alien' sighting yet. In 2004 – in the Lahaul-Spiti region of Himachal Pradesh, less than 60 miles (100km) south of Ladakh – Indian scientists spotted "a strange robot-like figure" which flew away. The five-man team of geologists from the Indian Science Research Organisation – led by Dr Anil Kulkarni of the Space Applications Centre in Ahmedabad – was studying glaciers in the remote Samudra Tapu Valley. They claim to have filmed the 4ft (1.2m) tall figure walking in the valley just 165ft (50m) away from them. The "humanoid object then rapidly became airborne and flew away". The encounter lasted 40 minutes and was witnessed by 14 persons including the scientists. Kulkarni interviewed everyone there separately and sent a report to many of the top agencies, including the Prime Minister's office. The *Indian Times*, which claims to have seen Dr Kulkarni's report, said it was "comprehensive" but was "mysteriously ignored by the Indian government" until recent events ramped up the urgency.

Sunil Dhar – now a geology professor with Dharamsala's Government Post Graduate College – was one of Kulkarni's team and says the sighting was "as unforgettable experience". He told *LA Times* reporter Mark Magmier that they noticed the robot-like figure one morning, "descending a hill just as they were climbing out of their tents". The group became "alarmed" when they thought the object was approaching them, but "it ascended back up the hill, changed colour from white to metallic black, and went airborne, hovering for about 10 minutes before disappearing". "We were all amazed," he said. "We thought it was some UFO; an object from some place that may not be the Earth." Dhar said they even provided photos to authorities, but no report was ever issued.

To veteran forteans, the situation has all the ingredients for developing into a full-blown scare. With anxious soldiers in a remote wilderness; a tense political context; an unidentified luminous aerial phenomenon; and rampant rumours of alien invasion and government complicity… all it needs is some panicking squaddies in an isolated border post to start firing at what they believe are advancing robots. *India Today, 5+19 Nov; Los Angeles Times, The Register, 6 Nov 2012.*

TOP: The Indian Astronomical Observatory at Hamle, whose staff observed some of the aerial phenomena. **ABOVE**: An image from film taken of the "humanoid object".

SIDELINES...

THAT'S TAUGHT US

Margaret Parker, 67, found a 'stray tortoise' under a heather plant in her garden in Carlisle, Cumbria. Her daughter Lorraine tried to feed it lettuce and tomato, but it didn't seem hungry. Perhaps it was sick… or dead. They called a wildlife rescue centre, and volunteer Pauline Adams arrived. Picking up the 'tortoise', she said: "It's not dead, it's ceramic". On the bottom was written: "Made in China". *The People, 19 Aug; Metro, 20 Aug 2012.*

ON THE DOUBLE

Kim Hefer, 29, from Little Paxton, Cambridgeshire, gave birth to twin boys Devon and Logan on 18 July 2012. They had the same birthday as their four-year-old twin brothers, Blake and Tristan. There are thought to be only six families in the world with two sets of twins born on the same day. A mathematician said the odds against this event were half a million to one – though the bookmaker William Hill offered odds of 30 million to one. *D.Mail, 30 Aug 2012.*

BERRY BAD TRIP

A man hiking through the woods in Unterwössen in Germany, near the Austrian border, encountered a naked and scratched man staggering around. He refused assistance and wandered off, so the hiker called the police, who tracked him down. He was a monk on a camping trip who had eaten toxic berries that had given him hallucinations and partial paralysis. Why he was naked was unexplained. *The Local (Sweden), 11 Sept; MX News (Sydney), 14 Sept 2012.*

NESSKI

Russian academics called for an investigation of claims that a monster resides in Siberia's Lake Labynkyr, one of the world's remotest lakes. Underwater scanners have recorded evidence of 'Nesski' – measuring up to 33ft (10m) in length – and allegedly there is a photograph. *MX News (Sydney), 20 Sept 2012.*

SIDELINES...

TEXAS WILDMAN

Residents if El Paso, Texas, claim they are terrorised by a "naked caveman" who lives in the hills and harasses hikers and passers-by. The man has apparently occupied a remote cave for three years, supporting himself by donating blood and recycling cans. The cave is surrounded by dead snakes, which he said were put out as food for wildlife and not for his own consumption. *MX News (Sydney), 17 Oct 2012*.

IMPRESSIVE OPTIMISM

Mr Saito, 77, from Japan's Sapporo ward, recently wrote a postcard to the mayor of Aberdeen, Washington State, asking him to look out for his library cards, which had been washed away in the devastating tsunami on 11 March 2011. About 1.5 million tons of Japanese debris is expected to reach US shores. *MX News (Sydney), 5 Sept 2012*.

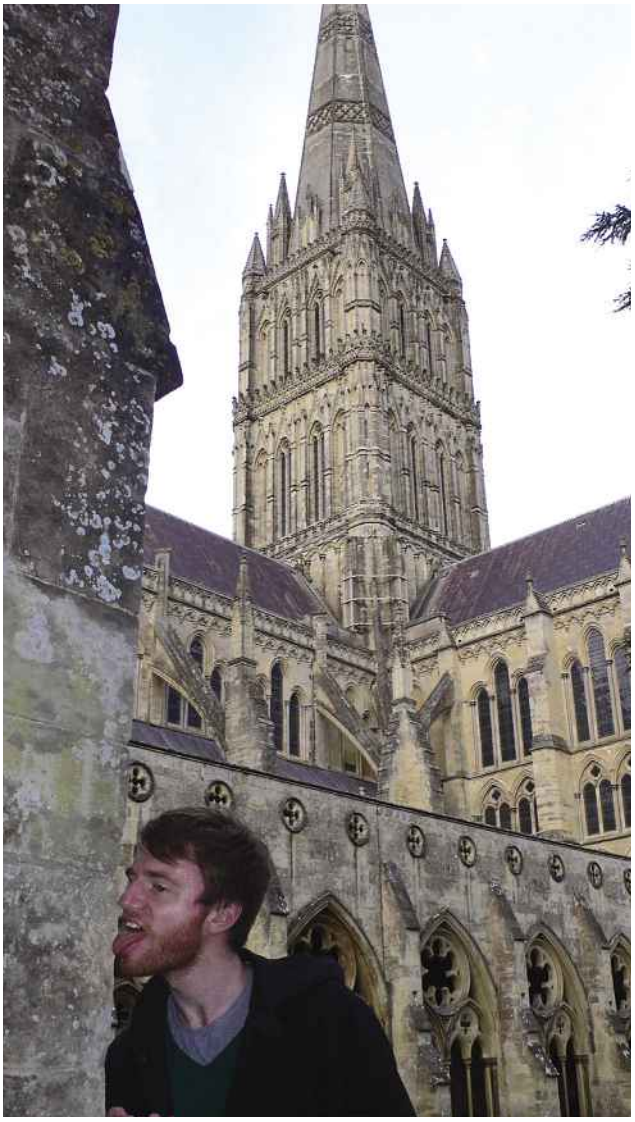
MARINE MYSTERY

An abandoned 28ft (8.5m) yacht was found on 11 August drifting about six miles (10km) from Sizewell nuclear power plant on the Suffolk coast, and was towed to nearby Orford Quay. There were no identification markings and no clues in the tidy cabin, apart from Dutch sea charts. There had been no reports of missing or stolen yachts fitting the vessel's description. *Mail on Sunday, 12 Aug; MX News (Sydney), 13 Aug 2012*.

OLDEST PARROT

Tarbu, 55, an African grey parrot, squawked "Cheerio" to Nina Morgan, 89, a widow from Exeter, as she made her way to bed. He survived just long enough to see her the next morning before dropping dead. Mrs Morgan and her husband had bought him in Tanzania in 1957, and he was probably the oldest pet parrot in the world. "He would say 'Hello, my darling' to me every morning when I gave him a digestive biscuit," she said. *D.Telegraph, D.Mail, 15 Sept 2012*.

THE DIARY OF A CATHEDRAL LICKER



Worcester was "exceedingly gritty and salty" and Durham was "disappointedly bland", but none came close to the horror of the "foul, sickly sweet" Wakefield. Back in January 2011, Heritage worker Lawrence Edmonds, 26, made a bet with his flatmate, Adam Drury, to lick all the Anglican cathedrals in the UK. By June 2012, he had licked all 42 cathedrals in England and had until 16 December to lick the 20 cathedrals in Scotland, Ireland and Wales. In the event, he finished ahead of schedule, licking his two final cathedrals – Bangor and St Asaph in Wales – on 5 December.

"Not only is Lichfield Cathedral quite tasty, it is also an incredibly attractive building," Edmonds wrote on his blog, which is a testament to his appreciation of ecclesiastical architecture as much as its flavour. He was stunned by the "complex and beautiful" fan-vaulting at Gloucester Cathedral. Lincoln was his overall favourite.

Lawrence told *FT* that he was now left with mixed emotions: "On the one hand, I'm greatly relieved it's all done, as it's been a crazy couple of years, what with work commitments and the high cost of travel. On the other hand, it was sad to bring such an enjoyable journey to an end."

The original bet called for flatmate Drury to streak outside York Minster if Edmonds won, but it remains to be seen whether this will take place. "That forfeit was conceived very hastily and without much thought. My main concern is that it could cause offence to York Minster (a place we both love) and the Anglican Church in general, which is the last thing I'd want to happen." A donation to the Minster now seems more likely.

Edmonds is planning to write a book about his experiences. "It's fairly safe to say that no one else has licked every Anglican cathedral in the United Kingdom; but licking aside, it will be a great opportunity to describe these wonderful buildings, as well as the role they play today."

Asked whether the future holds further licking opportunies, Edmonds mentioned the possibility of tackling Catholic cathedrals, and was tempted by "two incredible cathedrals in Colombia, one of which is made of salt!" *Church Times, 29 June; Sun, 25 Sept 2012*. Lawrence's blog is at: http://cathedrallicking.wordpress.com

BOTH PICS: LAWRENCE EDMONDS / HTTP://CATHEDRALLICKING.WORDPRESS.COM

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MATT PATTINSON

SCIENCE

PRACTICAL BRAIN DAMAGE

Acquired savant syndrome leads to unusual new gifts and may lead to very fortean thinking caps that will enable users to bypass preconceptions, says **DAVID HAMBLING**

Being brain-damaged hardly sounds like a desirable state – but in an unusual condition known as acquired savant syndrome, patients develop extraordinary talents as a result of head injuries. More remarkably, scientists are gradually beginning to understand this condition, and duplicate it by temporarily simulating brain-damage with electric pulses. What was once a bizarre curiosity may one day be a practical means to boost creativity and other talents.

Acquired savant syndrome is rare, with only about 50 reported cases. These are people who, like autistic savants, have specific skills in mathematics, music or other fields. The difference is that theirs only emerge after an accident.

Derek Amato, then aged 39, carelessly dived in at the shallow end of a swimming pool. His head stuck the tiles hard, and he suffered serious concussion. This resulted in permanent damage to his hearing and memory loss; he also found there were blobs moving in his peripheral vision and his fingers would not stop moving. On the fifth day of his recovery, Amato visited a musician friend and felt an irresistible impulse to play his piano. Amato had played rock guitar in his youth, but had no other musical experience. Suddenly he was playing piano.

"I just moved over and started playing – there was no transition, it was all at once, like I'd been doing it all my life… yet here I was, producing a fluid melody I'd never heard before." [1]

Amato has been tested extensively, and appears to have some kind of synæsthesia: the blobs in his vision resolve themselves into notes and he just plays along. He is the only known musical savant. The accident was six years ago; he has left his corporate job to concentrate on music, determined to make the most of his new talent.

Other acquired savants include Orlando Serrell who became a calendar calculator able to say what day of the week any date lies on after being hit by a baseball. Alonzo Clemens found he could create detailed animal sculptures after a head injury. [2]

TORSTEN BLACKWOOD / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

Alonzo Clemens found he could create animal sculptures after a head injury

The first systematic understanding of the condition came in 2003 from Bruce Miller, a professor of neurology at the University of California San Francisco. Miller studied patients with frontotemporal dementia, a degenerative condition affecting the front-left section of the brain. They lost some skills, but a significant number developed new artistic talent. This is consistent with previous studies showing that born savants typically have loss of function in the left brain hemisphere.

Researchers suggest that when the region of the brain responsible for categorising and filtering thought is damaged, savant skills can emerge. For example, when most people try to draw a building, they depict it as rectangular, even though what they are actually seeing is distorted by perspective. Expectations get in the way of seeing what is really there. On the other hand, Stephen Wiltshire, who has autism, can draw with a photographic level of detail after seeing a building for just a few minutes.

Researcher Professor Allan Snyder (pictured above), of the Centre for the Mind at the University of Sydney, suggests Wiltshire "has privileged access to more raw, less processed information about the world."

Snyder and his colleagues have attempted to mimic this effect in the laboratory using transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) to interfere with the part of the brain that synthesises high-level concepts. This reduces the effect of prior knowledge, and Snyder's team have shown that drawing, proofreading and verbal memory can all be enhanced. The effects wear off soon after the stimulation ends.

The TMS set-up is large and expensive, and the researchers are now working with transcranial direct current (tDCS) stimulation using electrodes just above the ears. This raises the possibility of cheap, portable 'thinking caps'. As with TMS, the affected neurons return to normal after about an hour, but within that time test subjects show a marked improvement in their ability to solve classic lateral thinking problems. The problems used included rearranging matchsticks spelling out sums in Roman numerals, and a challenge to connect nine dots with four straight lines.

In the groups with no stimulation or sham stimulation, nobody solved the nine-dot problem, but 14 of the 33 tDCS subjects solved it. Researchers say the odds of getting such results by chance are about one per cent. [3]

Not everyone is happy about the way these results are being presented. A group of neurologists writing in the *Guardian* suggest that tDCS has not been proven to produce novel thinking or 'insight' as claimed, and the whole field risks sliding into crowd-pleasing pseudoscience. [4]

However, there certainly seems to be some effect; and perhaps it's not suprising, since it is in one sense rediscovering what has long been known as the Centipede's Dilemma: too much critical thought spoils our ability to carry out simple tasks, like the centipede co-ordinating its many legs.

A Zen story about the calligrapher Kosen tells that he was unable to work while a student looked over his shoulder, criticising every effort. As soon as the student was distracted, Kosen effortlessly produced a fluent work of art that is still displayed at the Obaku temple in Kyoto. [5] In Zen, the inner critic is stilled by meditation. With tDCS it may be possible to Taser him into temporary silence.

Anything that allows one to think without preconceptions sounds like an interesting idea. One for every fortean's next Christmas list.

NOTES

1 www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2012/oct/12/experience-head-injury-musical-prodigy?INTCMP=SRCH

2 www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2012/05/eureka-when-a-blow-to-the-head-creates-a-sudden-genius/257282/

3 www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0016655

4 http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/blog/2011/feb/16/thinking-caps-pseudoscience-neuroscience

5 http://www.101zenstories.org/page/35/

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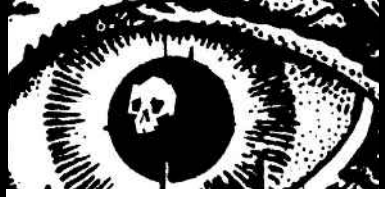


MATT PATTINSON

GHOSTWATCH

ALAN MURDIE looks at the relationship between ghost experiences and alcoholic beverages

COURTESY OF PAUL MOORE

ABOVE: The photograph taken at the King's Arms Hotel, Stansted, on 8 November 2012, in which a spectre straight out of M R James appears to have been captured.

HIGH SPIRITS, PART ONE

A photograph supposedly showing a shroud-like form appearing in the bar of the King's Arms Hotel in Stansted, Essex, was published at the end of November 2012, just in time for the Christmas season. The headline writers from the *Cambridge Evening News* and the *Saffron Walden Weekly News* asked" "Is this really a ghost propping up the bar...?" and inevitably they could not prevent themselves resorting to one of the oldest journalistic clichés for haunted pub stories declaring, "Whiskey, gin and vodka may not be the only spirits propping up the bar of a Stansted pub after a chance photo appeared to show a ghost-like figure lurking among its regulars."

The remarkable image – perhaps thankfully invisible when the picture was taken – was obtained by 22-year-old Josh Greenway, a chef at the King's Arms. Judging by the appearance of the form, it is perhaps not far removed from M R James's famous bed sheet spook in his story 'Oh Whistle and I'll come to you, my lad' with "a face of crumpled linen", or at the very least needing attention from an iron. As with a growing number of alleged ghost images, the picture was taken on a mobile telephone with nothing visible at the time.

Mr Greenway was quoted as saying: "I didn't have time to look for the picture after I'd taken it as I was really busy, so I put the phone in my pocket and forgot all about it. I only looked at it after I took another picture and saw it there." Something of a master of understatement, he added: "It was a bit spooky. I thought it might have just been distorted at first, but it looks like a Death Eater from Harry Potter or something." He also revealed: "I'm into ghosts so it was interesting to see."

Local opinion is divided over the validity of the photograph. Previous claims involve a Victorian lady haunting the pub, with landlord

THE LANDLORD SAYS THAT GLASSES FALL OFF SHELVES BY THEMSELVES BUT RARELY SMASH

Paul Moore telling how glasses seemingly fall off shelves by themselves but rarely smash. Recently a guest, "scared stiff of something", left in the middle of the night. It is perhaps not surprising the pub has a ghostly reputation, with nearby Stansted Hall hosting the Arthur Findley College for the Advancement of Spiritualism and Psychic Sciences. Such a connection is strengthened with the report going on to state that mediums and clairvoyants from the College declare the pub has "energy", leading Mr Moore to repeat the same reporter's joke again: "It's not just bottled spirits we've got here!"

With my own memory for haunted Essex pubs stretching back to December 1990 and the nine-day wonder of an alleged photo of a glowing form dubbed 'Ronnie the Roundhead' obtained by the landlord at the Cross Keys Inn at Saffron Walden, I have little faith in this photograph ultimately proving to have anything other than a normal explanation. In the case of the Cross Keys pub – more reliably haunted by the sound of footsteps in the early 1960s – I discovered that the original picture and negative had been swiftly sent to a publicity agent in London named Barrington-Smythe by the beginning of January 1991, following an initial wave of coverage in the *Cambridge Evening News* (cuttings still on display when I last visited the pub). Years later, the landlord at the time was recalled as 'a character' by successors.

Of course, cynics and bar-room sceptics have long attributed ghost experiences to alcoholic excess. In fact, contrary to a widely held belief, drunkenness does not in itself cause hallucinations. The popular idea that it does is based, no doubt, on the visual hallucinations of alcoholic delirium – *delirium tremens* – a very different matter from ordinary drunkenness. Harry Price recognised this distinction, cheerfully packing brandy in ghost hunting kits. But the perpetual wisecrack about 'spirits of the alcoholic variety' perhaps deserves to be considered within a more wide-ranging examination of the relationship between ghost experiences and alcohol. One soon finds accounts suggesting that this relationship is a good deal more varied and complex than might be supposed. Close reading of texts indicates that intoxication is not a common feature, and sightings should not be suspect simply because they occur at Christmas time, are associated with a pub or occur when reminiscing with friends over a glass or two.

Doubt might attach on several grounds to the account submitted in 1927 by a correspondent named Lovell to the *Daily News*. He recalled having a friend called Spencer Charters with whom he shared a house in Norfolk before Charters went off to serve in the South African War of 1899. Just after Christmas, when Charters had been away for 12 months, Lovell hosted a seasonal party for some mutual old acquaintances. It was a cold snowy evening, but the guests were warmed by the contents of the punch bowl on the dining table. All present were classed as 'bosom pals' of Charters. At an appropriate stage a member of the gathering identified only as J—— exclaimed, "Now for toasts!"

Thinking of their absent friend in South Africa, Lovell immediately responded: "Good old Charters! May he return to us soon! We're

thinking of you, old comrade." Exclamations of "Charters forever! May he soon return!" followed. All present engaged in the toasts until one guest suddenly dropped his glass, calling "Look there!"

Lovell recalled following his friend's gaze in the direction of the windows. There, to his astonishment, he saw Charters standing outside. "His face was deathly pale, and he looked at us with great sorrowful eyes. As they looked, the form faded away rapidly, seemingly into the snowy mist of the night. Of the whole party, only J and Lovell saw the figure of Charters". The sequel – a predictably familiar one – was that sometime afterwards, Lovell received news that Charters had been killed in South Africa at the exact time his form had been seen. His last words to his comrades were: "Lovell! Lovell! How I wish I could see you and the boys". If true, the case is a classic 'crisis apparition'. ('*Warnings from Beyond'*, 1927, *Daily News*, London.)

When officers of the 5th Lancers were in their mess at the West Cavalry Barracks, Aldershot, southern England, during Christmas time in either 1875 or 1876, they saw a ghostly form of a woman pass the window at around 8.45pm. A witness recalled in 1885 seeing "a young woman, in what appeared a soiled or somewhat worn bridal dress, walk or glide slowly past the window from east to west. She was about at the centre of the window when I observed her, and outside the window." What was remarkable was that the mess was on an upper floor, so the figure was floating at least 30ft (9m) in the air. The witness emphasised, "All present had been drinking very little wine; and the dinner had been very quiet." The story made it into volume two of *Phantasms of the Living* (1886), published by the Society for Psychical Research. However, a story from the witness of a ghostly young woman (believed to be a deceased governess) seen in a house in Kilburn around 1867 was rejected not because he had "drunk one or two glasses of sherry" but because no corroboration was possible.

In December 1902 the *Journal* of the Society for Psychical Research published an account of sightings of another ghostly lady in white who frequented a cellar where alcohol was stored in a property identified only as 'M—— House'. It was witnessed by the cook who stated: "I also once saw a tall figure in white, in the cellar at the end of the passage, with one finger held up. I was very much frightened, and let the jug of beer I had been getting fall." Of course, we do not know if the cook had been drinking herself.

Drunken hallucination might have been proposed as the explanation for a phantom herd of pigs charging down a lane between the villages of Cawthorpe and Legbourne in Lincolnshire on a Christmas morning, probably sometime in the 1960s. The witness, who was going for a Christmas drink, first heard human footsteps and then jumped aside to avoid being knocked down by a herd of stampeding pigs, which then vanished inexplicably. On reaching the village pub he was told by the landlord that the ghosts arose from a murder that occurred "in the 1800s" when a man herding pigs back from a market at Louth had been ambushed and had his throat cut in a robbery. Unfortunately, Joan Forman in *Haunted East Anglia* (1974) does not give many more details, but the account makes it quite clear that the witness was walking to the pub, not leaving it.

More often, a ghost witness considers or resorts to alcohol as a restorative to quell excited nerves. When Richard Parsons was scared by the notorious Cock Lane ghost in 1760, he demanded "the largest brandy you have" from a landlord named Franzen who was similarly agitated and swiftly joined him. (See *The Cock Lane Ghost*, 1965, by Douglas Grant)

Over a century later a lady who saw a male ghost in Brighton related: "I found myself trembling from head to foot... and at first thought of calling the servants; but on consideration did not do so, as I thought they might laugh at me. I longed to go down for some brandy, but did not dare; and after a while I summoned up courage to creep into my room, which was next door. I then locked the door (contrary to my usual custom) and passed the night undisturbed, sleeping soundly." (*Journal of the SPR*, vol 3, 1887-88.)

Similarly, a climber scared by the Big Grey Man of Ben Macdhui sought recovery for his terrifying experience with whisky and a rubdown. As Andy Roberts commented: "Who needs exorcists, psychologists or shamans?"(The Big Grey Man of Ben Macdhui' in *Fortean Studies* vol 5, 1997, 152-171.)

What of the attitude of the restless dead themselves to alcohol?

Apparitions may take offence at drunken and inappropriate behaviour. The spirit of an army lieutenant that materialised at a séance by the Polish medium Franek Kluski in the early 20th century took understandable offence when accused by a sitter of smelling of vodka – in fact it was a living participant at the séance, not the manifesting spirit, who had been imbibing. (See 'The Enigma of Franek Kluski' by Zofia Weaver in *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* vol 58, 1991-92, 289-98.)

James Wentworth Day (1899-1983) hinted that the disturbed night suffered by a boorish and sceptical businessman after demanding "a proper bar" at an unidentified manor house in England in 1942 might have been due to the attention of the property's disapproving 'strangling ghost'. The man later descended into alcoholic madness and died prematurely. Alternatively, Day suggested it was because the man "drank his way relentlessly through a case or more of whisky in the course of a long weekend." (*Here are Ghosts and Witches,* 1954).

One might be tempted to think that certain denizens of the spirit world are particularly troublesome in respect of alcohol – why else haunt and disturb public houses to such a degree, one might ask? Poltergeists can be particularly badly behaved. The Bell Witch in Tennessee was said to have disturbed mourners at the funeral of John Bell Snr in December 1820 by singing "Row Me Up Some Brandy O" over and over again in a shrill voice. A poltergeist threw a bottle of port around at Worksop in 1883 and another attacked a wine shop in Turin in 1900, witnessed by Professor Cesare Lombroso, author of *After Death, What*? (1909). At Borley Rectory in 1929, hostile poltergeists supposedly turned wine into ink, though that was attributed to legerdemain by Harry Price, a skilled amateur conjuror.

The late psychical researcher Montague Keen gave an account of some unusual occurrences in his house. The unexplained movement of a wine rack and the smashing of wine bottles was "the tip of an apparent poltergeist iceberg" occurring in the home of a man who devoted many years to survival research (See *The Paranormal Review,* January 2003, issue 25).

Of course, in numerous other cases, the dead have supposedly made their presence known via upturned wine glasses or tumblers used in impromptu Ouija board sessions. Rather different were experiments by a Dr Gower, who conducted séances in both Britain and the United States in 1904. He reported an occasion when the sitters requested that various liquids on a table should be shaken, including the water in a water jug and whisky in a bottle. "Each of these shook successively in accordance with the requests, without being touched in any way by the sitters, and the table being motionless at the time." ('Sittings for Physical Phenomena in America', *Proceedings* of the SPR vol 21, 1907.)

However, some experiences can be more positive. On Saturday, 14 December 1991, during an open circle at Leicester Progressive Spiritualist Church, a developing medium, Florrie Freeman, told a Mr Dudley Bak of her vision of "a rather small, slightly built man" standing beside him. The figure wore a Father Christmas hat, held a bottle of sherry and two sherry glasses, and gave a message "to have a drink with him at Christmas", and "that you were right and he was wrong". Mr Bak identified this as coming from a deceased and sceptical neighbour who had died in February 1991. The previous Christmas they had shared a bottle of sherry at Mr Bak's flat with his neighbour promising to return if there was any survival after death. Dudley Bak maintained he had not told anyone either of the Christmas drink or promise, and took the vision as evidence of the continuing existence of his friend. (See *The Psi Researcher,* 1993, no.10).

In next month's column, I will examine the evidence which suggests that ghosts prefer beer to either spirits or wine...

Bring out your dead!

The dapper dead rise in Indonesia and Thailand, while corpse-keepers in the UK and US face jail

A family in Indonesia hold up the mummy of a relative after giving him new clothes in a ritual in Tana Toraja, Sulawesi Island. The ritual, called ma'nene, involves changing the clothes of mummified ancestors every three years to honour the dead. There is a similar ritual in Madagascar, called famadihana (literally "the turning of the corpses"), which occurs every five to seven years (see "Awakening the dead in Madagascar" by Michael Griffin, **FT55:47-49**, **56:38-40**). *Irish Independent, 25 Aug; MX News (Sydney), 27 Aug 2012.* PHOTO: ELANG HERDIAN / AP / PA IMAGES

● A man left his father's dead body in bed for five months so he could continue to claim his benefits. Guy Blackburn, 54, a former lorry driver, died of natural causes in Penwortham, Lancashire, in November 2010, but his son Christopher, 28, failed to tell anyone, using air fresheners around the house. When his 10-year-old daughter visited the house, he told her that her grandfather was asleep or in "a stinking mood". He pleaded guilty to preventing a lawful and decent burial and the theft of £1,869 of benefits, and on 14 March was jailed for three years. *D.Express, D.Mail, 15 Mar 2012.*

● Linda Chase, 72, kept the dead body of her companion Charles Zigler in a chair in their home in Jackson, Michigan, for 18 months. They had worked together and moved in with each other about 10 years ago. She kept his corpse clean and dressed and talked to him while watching NASCAR (stock car racing) on television. "It's not that I'm heartless – I just didn't want to be alone," she said. "He was the only guy who was ever nice to me." Jackson police stumbled on Mr Zigler's body at 365 N. Cooper Street on 6 July 2012. They believe he died of natural causes, aged 67, in December 2010, but Ms Chase said it was a year later. She said there was not a bad smell. She admitted cashing his benefit cheques after his death. "I'm probably going to prison," she said. *blog.mlive.com, 10 July; Adelaide Advertiser, 13 July 2012.*

● Hans Kristian Rausing, the Tetra Pak billionaire, hid the body of his wife at their £70 million house in Chelsea, west London, for two months. Eva Rausing's decomposing remains were found on 11 July under clothing and bin bags in a sealed room on the second floor, after police had pulled her husband over for driving erratically. A post mortem examination showed that the 48-year-old, who was fitted with a pacemaker, had died on 7 May as a result of heart failure coupled with drug use. Traces of cocaine, opiates and amphetamines were found in her body. On 1 August her 49-year-old husband pleased guilty to preventing her lawful burial, saying: "I know it's selfish, but I just didn't want her to leave… With the benefit of hindsight, I think that following her death I didn't act rationally. I tried to carry on as if her death had not happened and batted away any inquiries about her. I also took some measures to remove the smell. I believe that in the period since Eva's death I suffered some sort of breakdown." Rausing was sentenced to 10 months in prison, suspended for two years, and was ordered to attend a residential drug rehabilitation unit for two years. *D.Telegraph, Metro, Sun, 2 Aug 2012. For the last round-up of corpse-keepers, see* **FT278:26-27**.

The mummified body of a Thai monk, Phra Khru Samathakittikhun, displayed in Wat Kunaram on Koh Samui island in Thailand. The monk died in Ko Samui, Thailand, in 1973, and his body was preserved to inspire future generations to follow Buddhist teachings. He was given Ray-Ban sunglasses to avoid scaring children after one of his eyes fell out. *Metro, 12 July 2009; Sun, 16 July 2011.* PHOTO: P KITTIWONGSAKUL / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

FORTEAN FOLLOW-UPS

Mole Man's house sold, D-Day pigeon stumps the code-breakers and self-trepanned woman dies

RUARIDH CONNELLAN / BARCROFT MEDIA / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Million-pound Mole Hole; William Lyttle's Hackney home has had its tunnels filled in and was sold for £1.1 million.

SELF-TREPANNED WOMAN [FT134:6]

Heather Perry, from Upleadon in Gloucestershire, flew to the US in 2000 to drill a hole in her head under the direction of Peter Halvorson of the International Trepanation Advocacy Group. The DIY operation was filmed in Utah by ABC TV, with the FBI reportedly in hot pursuit.

"I felt the benefits immediately," she said. "I can't say they have been particularly dramatic, but they are there and I feel better generally; and there's definitely more mental clarity." Press reports claimed she had done it to relieve the chronic fatigue syndrome ME. "It had nothing to do with my chronic fatigue or depression, specifically, but the papers decided to link those things up," she told an interviewer. "It was basically a consciousness expansion experiment."

Perry had frequented the rave scene in the late 1980s and had taken a lot of LSD. She wrote several novels, a pamphlet promoting self-trepanation and a memoir about her family and the legal conflicts brought on by the skull-drilling. None of these works was published. She died from an overdose of morphine and diazepam in April 2012, aged 41. *Scienceblogs.com, 4 Aug 2008; Guardian, 26 April; This is Gloucestershire, 7 Nov; Sun, 23 Nov; (Sydney) D.Telegraph, 24 Nov 2012.*

THE MOLE MAN OF HACKNEY [FT269:26]

William Lyttle (c.1921-2010) was known as the "Mole Man" for his 40 years of digging a labyrinth of tunnels beneath his four-storey, 20-room Victorian house on the corner of Stamford Road and Mortimer Road in Hackney, north-east London. Following his eviction in 2006 [**FT215:4**], engineers removed 20 (or 33) tons of debris, including four cars and a boat, from under the house before they could fill in the tunnels with concrete. The roofless shell of the house was sold at auction on 19 July 2012 for just over £1.1 million, with permission for two new three-storey houses on the site. The unnamed new owners have named the plot the "Mole Hole". *Metro, 20 July 2012.*

LILY OF THE MOHAWKS [FT286:21]

Kateri Tekakwitha (1656-80), the daughter of a Mohawk chief and known as "Lily of the Mohawks", was almost blinded by smallpox and baptised by a French Jesuit in 1676. She devoted her remaining years to prayer and the care of the sick and elderly. (Tekakwitha means either "one who puts things in order" or "she who bumps into things" – reports differ.) The process to make her a saint began in 1884, she was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1980, and canonised on 21 October 2012, along with six others. It was a moment of pride for 680,000 Native American Catholics and members of her tribe gathered in St Peter's Square in Rome to celebrate in traditional headdresses. Kateri is the first Native American saint from the United States. *Times, 26 July; Independent, Int. Herald Tribune, 22 Oct 2012.*

OUR LORD AND HIS LADY WIFE [FT294:4]

The fourth century papyrus fragment that includes the phrase (in Coptic script) "Jesus said to them, My wife…" is probably a forgery, according to Professor Francis Watson of Durham University. He points out that all of the phrases have been copied, sometimes with small alterations, from printed editions of the Gospel of Thomas – one of the Gnostic texts found in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in 1945. In particular, there is a line break in one word that appears to have been lifted directly from a modern edition. It is common for words to be broken in ancient scripts, such as Coptic, which were written without hyphens; but it is very rare for the same break to appear in the same work in different manuscripts.

There's also a mistake or 'typo' (not specified in our sources). Andrew Bernhard from Oxford University suggests that a forger might have copied this error not from a printed text, but from a Coptic-

English translation of the Gospel of Thomas on the Internet – which accidentally omits the Coptic letter 'M'. Meanwhile, an editorial in *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican's daily newspaper, claimed the papyrus was a "clumsy fake", probably manufactured for sale. *Guardian, 22+29 Sept; NY Post, 17 Oct 2012.*

FRESCO FIASCO [FT294:12]

Ecce Homo, the fresco of Jesus in Borja, north-eastern Spain, transformed into *Ecce Mono* ("Behold the Monkey") by the botched restoration of an elderly parishioner, can be rectified. There were fears that the portrait would remain a travesty, but art historian Prof Maria Gomez said solvents could remove the re-paint "in seven minutes". Stand by with stopwatches… *MX News (Sydney), 10 Oct 2012.*

DREAMS OF POWER [FT294:22]

Air Fuel Synthesis, a small company based in Darlington, Co Durham, has developed 'air capture' technology to create synthetic petrol using only air and electricity. This could be a breakthrough in the battle against climate change and help solve the global energy crisis. The 'petrol from air' technology involves taking carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and merging it with hydrogen (produced by electrolysing water vapour) to produce methanol, which in turn is passed through a gasoline fuel reactor, creating petrol. The company says it has produced five litres of petrol in less than three months at its demonstration facility in Stockton-on-Tees. This can be used in any regular petrol engine and, if renewable energy is used to provide the electricity, it could become completely carbon-neutral. The privately funded £1.1 million project, in development for the last two years, has the support of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers in London. Tim Fox, head of energy at the Institution, said: "It sounds too good to be true, but it's true. I've seen it." The technology has yet to interest major oil companies – which is a relief for the company's founder, Professor Tony Marmont, who fears that the oil industry could buy up and suppress it. If sufficient finds can be raised, the company hopes to build a large plant that could produce over a ton of petrol every day within two years, and a refinery-sized operation within 15 years. *Irish Independent, Daily Record, <i>, 20 Oct 2012.*

D-DAY PIGEON [FT296:20]

Cryptographers at GCHQ (Government Communication Headquarters) in Cheltenham say they are stumped by the coded message found on the leg of a dead pigeon in a Surrey chimney, unless someone can provide further information. GCHQ historian Tony (who asked that only his first name be used) believes there are two ways the message might have been coded. One is with a so-called one-time pad where a random 'key' is applied to a message. If the key is truly random and known only to sender and recipient, the code can be unbreakable. Alternatively, the code might have been based on a specific – and now probably destroyed – codebook compiled for a particular operation so the maximum amount of information about that operation could be relayed in the shortest message (this could be done in conjunction with a one-time pad). *BBC News, 23 Nov 2012.*

VICTIM'S HEAD FOUND [FT291:10]

Bisexual porn actor Luke Magnotta killed his lover, Chinese student Jun Lin, in Montreal last May. He filmed himself cutting up his body and eating some choice cuts, and posted other body parts to Canadian political parties. He was arrested in Berlin and repatriated to Canada. A human head was found in Angrignon Park, Montreal, on 30 June. DNA tests subsequently confirmed that this belonged to Jun Lin. *Int. Herald Tribune, 6 July 2012.*

KONSPIRACY KORNER

ROBIN RAMSAY, EDITOR OF LOBSTER, REPORTS FROM THE BUNKER ON…

AN HISTORIC BRITISH STATE CONSPIRACY

Despite sounding like a Channel 5 afternoon TV thriller, Thomas Mahl's *Desperate Deceptions* (1999), originally his PhD thesis, is the story of one of the great covert operations – or one of the historically most significant conspiracies – ever mounted by the British state. In 1939, top of the agenda for the British government was how to get America into the war against Hitler. While President Roosevelt and the East coast anglophile elites who were running American foreign policy secretly wanted to join the war, the majority of the American population and its politicians were against getting embroiled again in another European conflict. How to overcome the isolationist opposition? The British secret state was invited to do it; and, with the assistance of the anglophiles, set up a propaganda and disinformation operation in the Rockefeller Center in New York under the guise of British Security Co-ordination (BSC).

BSC created a large number of front groups supporting American intervention, ran smear campaigns against the leading isolationist politicians and, with the co-operation of the Gallup polling organisation, produced fake polls showing support for intervention. It planted hundreds of articles in sympathetic newspapers, seduced and blackmailed some of the leading isolationists and disrupted their political campaigns. BSC even managed to manipulate the Republican Party's internal politics to the point where they placed the pro-war Wendell Wilkie, a man who had never previously been elected to office, as the Republican candidate for president in 1940. None of the isolationists grasped that the misfortunes, setbacks and embarrassments they were suffering were the result of offensive operations. The only people who seem to have spotted what was going on were the American Communist Party (then following the line dictated by the Soviet-German pact and opposed to US entry into the war), and they were ignored.

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

Having cleared the way for America's entry into the war with Hitler, the Roosevelt-led 'war party' contrived to allow Japan to attack Pearl Harbor and this ensured war in the Pacific. As WWII came to a climax and the American political class contemplated demobilisation, civilianisation of the economy and a return to the mass unemployment which only the war economy had solved, an obvious solution presented itself: keep the war economy going; find a new 'enemy'. And so the 'Red Menace' was fabricated. The Soviet Union, devastated by German scorched earth tactics from the Ukraine to its Western border, with civilian losses of 20 million, was presented as poised to send its tank columns to the English Channel. Compared to the fabrication of the Cold War, fabricating intelligence about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction was small beer indeed.

In 1967, in a briefing entitled "Countering Criticism of the Warren Report", the CIA stated that "Conspiracy on the large scale often suggested would be impossible to conceal in the United States, esp. since informants could expect to receive large royalties, etc.". This argument is a favourite of what we might call anti-conspiracy theorists, yet this vast covert political operation, which Mahl estimates involved 2,000 people, remained secret until 1962 when bits of the story appeared in *The Quiet Canadian*, about the head of BSC, William Stevenson, who gave the book's author access to some of his papers. Further bits and pieces dribbled out before Mahl pieced the fragments together. This mind-boggling story was entirely concealed for 15 years, and its most startling features concealed for over 40. In a similar way, the Bletchley Park code-breaking story remained secret until 1970. The CIA was wrong: large-scale conspiracies *can* be kept secret for decades.

ROCK YOUR BABY

Women getting pregnant when they're already pregnant is rare, but babies just keep on bouncing all over the world...

BORN FROM TWO WOMBS

Nathan and Natalie Barbosa were born at Morton Plant Hospital in Clearwater, Florida, on 15 September 2011. Nathan was delivered at 36 weeks and weighed 5lb 8oz (2.49kg). His sister emerged two minutes later, weighing 5lb 10oz (2.55kg). Their mother, Andreea [sic] Barbosa, had two wombs, a condition known as uterus didelphys. She and her husband Miguel already had a two-year-old daughter. There have only been 70 to 100 known cases worldwide of women with uterus didelphys being pregnant in both uteruses at the same time. Few carry their babies to term – about one in five million. For other examples, see **FT81:9**, **296:23**. *D.Mail, 20 Sept 2011.*

PREGNANT TWICE

Julia Grovenburg, 31, from Fort Smith, Arkansas, was just over eight weeks pregnant when she went to hospital for a routine ultrasound in June 2009. Doctors located a female fœtus, but then discovered a smaller male fœtus growing beside it. Mrs Grovenburg might have conceived her son Hudson two and a half weeks after her daughter Jillian. Reports of superfœtation, or conceiving while pregnant, are quite rare, although doctors admit that cases may have gone unreported. They have been noted since ancient times; Hippocrates, Aristotle and Pliny all wrote of it, Hippocrates at some length. Paré, Harvey and many other authorities describe cases. The most curious examples are those in which children of different colours, either twins or near the same age, are born to the same woman. For many examples of superfœtation and uterus didelphus (sic), see the wonderful *Anomalies and Curiosities of Medicine* (1896) by George Gould & Walter Pyle. *ABC News, 24 Sept; D.Mirror, Sunday Mail (Brisbane), 26 Sept 2009.*

BOUNCING BABIES

A four-year-old boy fell from a sixth-floor window in Zagreb, but only broke a leg as he landed on bushes. *MX News (Brisbane), 5 July 2010.*

Lucy Conway, a toddler, fell head first from a second-floor window in Wall Heath, West Midlands, but escaped with bruising after landing on bin bags filled with soft toys. *Sun, 24 July 2010.*

CINDY SINGLETON / GETTY IMAGES

Adam Burroughs, 18 months old, fell 20ft (6m) head first from a window onto a driveway in Enfield, north London, escaping with a few cuts and bruises. *Sun, 15 Jan 2011.*

Two-year-old Elias Maier survived a 30ft (9m) drop from an apartment window in Leipzig, Germany, when building worker Michael Bach, 48, caught him. *Metro, 4 Mar 2011.*

A year-old boy survived a 90ft (27m) fall from an eighth-floor window in Novosibirsk, Russia, after bouncing off an awning and into a hedge. *Sun, 14 May 2011.*

A two-year-old survived a 25ft (7.6m) drop from a third-floor window in Amersham, Buckinghamshire, after landing in a rose bush. *Sun, 3 June 2011.*

A two-year-old survived a fall from a third-floor window somewhere in the US when he landed on a porch awning, after which he rolled over the edge and dropped 12ft (3.6m) to the pavement. *Irish Independent, 20 June 2011.*

LUKASZ LASKA / GETTY IMAGES

I GAVE BIRTH TO A DEVIL BABY!

Ana Feria Santos, 28, a mother of five from Nueva Estrella, near Lorica on the coast of Colombia, claims her son, born last September, is possessed by Satan. At four weeks he could already stand up and walk. His mother – the wife of taxi driver Óscar Palencia López – said the child frequently hid around the house and cackled in an 'adult' way for hours on end. She told the RCN Radio station: "He walks like an adult, sometimes going off and hiding underneath the bed, in a suitcase, in the washing machine or in the fridge."

Another hiding place was said to be a bag hanging on the wall. "The bag would break if it held 20 bananas," she said, "so how come it didn't break when the baby was in it?" She pointed to a cupboard and said: "I saw him sitting on that looking like a one-year-old boy. He had intimidating eyes." Her neighbours said the child was possessed by a 'malign spirit' and was capable of producing fire, remarking that burn marks had been found on his clothes and on a sofa where he regularly sat. Some frightened neighbours were pelting the family's wooden shack being with stones every night... or could it have been a stone-throwing poltergeist?

However, the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, the National Police and the Catholic Church all refused to confirm claims that black magic was involved. A team of psychologists, a social worker, a nutritionist and a lawyer were set to investigate, with one source saying: "The child shows signs of abuse. Two small burns were found on the palm of the left hand and for that reason a restoration measure was adopted to [safeguard] the family environment. The parents received a warning while the facts are being clarified." *mail.co.uk, 29 Oct; Sun,7 Nov 2012.*

TOM DE BRUYNE / GETTY IMAGES

Lewis Carpenter, two, fell 20ft (6m) from his bedroom window in Plymouth, Devon. He hit the guttering on the front porch, then bounced onto the recycling bin before reaching the ground. He suffered a minor skull fracture. Sun, 24 June 2011.

Falling from a second floor window in Sydney, a five-year-old girl hit a roof below, bounced onto a car before landing on a concrete path. She escaped serious injury. *Queensland Times, 25 July 2011.*

A baby aged 15 months was unhurt after plunging 40ft (12m) from a balcony, then bouncing off a car bonnet in Seville, Spain. *D.Mirror, 6 Sept 2011.*

A six-year-old Chinese boy fell from a fifth-floor balcony in Shanghai, imitating a video game by using an umbrella as a parachute. He had been playing *Parachute Jump* on his aunt's mobile phone. He escaped injury when his clothes got caught on another balcony, according to the *Shanghai Daily*. Residents found him hanging from the side of the building and pulled him back inside. *MX News (Sydney), 1 Feb 2012.*

A boy of four who fell 30ft (9m) from a balcony in Lobzenica, Poland, was caught be a woman passer-by who heard him shouting "Mum!" *D.Mirror, 11 Feb 2012.*

A one-year-old boy plunged 30ft (9m) from a third floor window in Lower Clapton, east London, landing on a flat roof above a parade of shops. As he crawled towards the edge and a further 20ft (6m) drop, a passer-by dashed into the building and rescued him. He sustained a broken jaw and a few cuts and bruises. *D.Express, 25 May 2012.*

Freddy Smith, two, fell off a three-storey building in Medford, Oregon, into the arms of neighbour Kristen Beach, 21, who happened to be in the street below. He was unscathed. *az.central.com (Arizona), 2 July 2012.*

A five-year-old boy tore through a fifth-storey window screen in Windsor, Ontario, and fell about 35ft (10.6m) onto a paved driveway. At the time of the report, he appeared to have escaped injury, apart from some abrasions. *(Victoria, BC) Times Colonist, 6 July 2012.*

A baby who fell 50ft (15m) from flats in Jaipur, India, bounced off power lines into a bystander's arms. *Sun, 27 June 2012.*

Mohammad Rayyan Ali, 17 months, fell 20ft (6m) head first from a window in Oldham, Greater Manchester, landing on grass. He suffered a skull fracture, but four days later he was back home playing football. *D.Mirror, 10 Aug 2012.*

A woman aged 27 hurled possessions out of a first-floor window in Leon, Spain, after suffering "a loss of control". She then dangled her 18-month-old daughter out of the window, which was 16ft (5m) above the ground. The woman's father, who just happened to be walking by, sprinted over and managed to grab the infant before she hit the ground. *D.Mail, 5 Nov 2012.*

JO UNRUH / GETTY IMAGES

Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

161. VIRGINITY TESTS

The myth

A medical examination can determine whether or not a woman is a virgin.

HUNT EMERSON

The "truth"

Bad news for the writers of TV crime dramas: there is no way a doctor can tell, by physical examination, whether a woman has ever had sexual intercourse. (Obviously, this doesn't exclude evidence of *recent* sexual activity, such as the presence of semen). Firstly, there's the myth of the intactness of the hymen, a leading contender for Most Misunderstood Part of the Human Body. It's widely believed (even by many dictionaries and encyclopædias) that the hymen is a solid barrier, which becomes torn asunder the first time an object (such as a penis) enters the vagina. This is nonsense; a healthy hymen has a hole in it – clearly, since otherwise it would be impossible to menstruate. A small number of women are in fact born with unbroken hymens, which have to be corrected by surgery. During adolescence, in any case, much hymenal tissue is worn away by ordinary activities such as washing, or running. In short, there is no standard state in which the hymen of a virgin or a non-virgin should present, and therefore no possible means of telling which is which. Studies have found that even when examined at magnification, using special equipment, the sexual organs of most individual women show no discernible change before and after first intercourse.

Sources

Don't swallow your gum & other medical myths debunked by Aaron Carroll & Rachel Vreeman (Penguin, 2009); www.livescience.com/13553-5-myths-women-bodies.html; www.pamf.org/teen/health/femalehealth/hymen.html; www.psychologytoday.com/blog/all-about-sex/201103/the-hymen-membrane-widely-misunderstood

Disclaimer

As we never tire of pointing out, FT is not a medical magazine, and we are always open – wide open, even – to correction, disputation, and clarification.

Mythchaser

There are more pet tigers in Texas than there are wild tigers on Earth: fact or factoid? a reader asks.

FOR MORE MYTHCONCEPTIONS, GO TO:
www.forteantimes.com/strangedays/mythbusters

DOGGED DEVOTION

A round-up of faithful hounds keeping vigil over their dead masters and tracking down their errant owners

LA VOZ DEL INTERIOR (WWW.LAVOZ.COM.AR)

LEFT: Capitan, by his master's grave. **BOTTOM LEFT:** The memorial to Tip. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Charles Gough's dog standing vigil over his dead master at Helvellyn in the Lake District in 1805.

● Though the tale of Greyfriars Bobby turns out to be not quite in line with the sentimental legend (see pp44-51), there are many other examples of similar canine fidelity.

In the Argentinean town of Villa Carlos Paz, for example, a dog has allegedly refused to leave his dead master's grave for six years. Miguel Guzman adopted German shepherd Capitan in 2005 as a gift for his teenage son, Damian. When Miguel died in 2006, Capitan ran away from home. "We searched for him, but he had vanished," said Miguel's widow Veronica. "We thought he must have got run over and died. The following Sunday we went to the cemetery, and Damian recognised his pet. Capitan came up to us, barking and wailing as if he were crying… We had never taken him to the cemetery, so it's a mystery how he managed to find the place."

Cemetery director Hector Baccega said he and his staff had been feeding and taking care of Capitan. "He turned up here one day, all on his own, and started wandering all around the cemetery until he eventually found the tomb of his master," he said. "During the day he sometimes has a walk, but at six o'clock sharp, he lies on the grave and stays there all night."

"He always returned to the cemetery on his own"

Damian said the family had tried to bring Capitan home several times but that he always returned to the cemetery on his own. "I think he's going to be there until he dies, too. He's looking after my dad," he said. *The Sideshow, 13 Sept; D.Mail, 14 Sept 2012.*

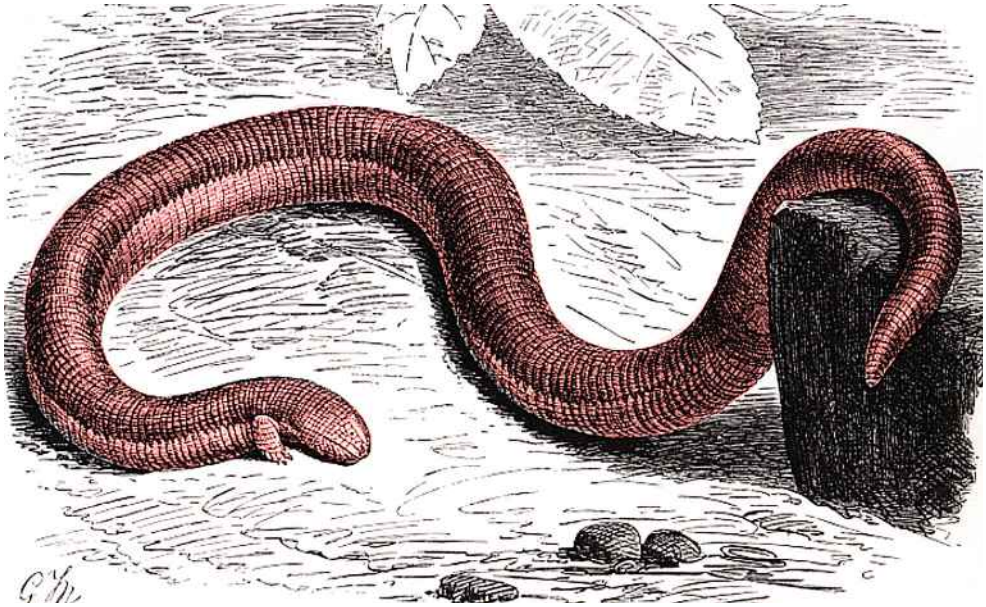
● Another dog reportedly tracked down his master's grave, even though he had never been there before. Border collie Spot escaped from the home of his new owners at Higher Hurdsfield, Macclesfield, Cheshire, on Christmas Eve 1999, and walked four miles (6.6km) across busy main roads to find the grave of Denis Goodier, who had died the previous July, aged 73. The pair had been inseparable since Mr Goodier raised Spot from a pup on his dairy farm. Spot was found by a policeman lying on the grave in St James's churchyard in Sutton, and was returned to sheepdog trainer Brian Belfield. Mr Goodier's widow Margaret said Spot had not been to the grave before as she had given him away almost immediately after her husband's death, which followed a long illness. *Newcastle Journal, D.Telegraph, 8 Jan 2000.*

● On 7 April 1990, a rambler found a starving 14-year-old collie-cross called Ruswarp on Devil's Staircase hill near Llandridnod Wells, mid-Wales. Less than half a mile way was the badly decomposed body of his master, Graham Nuttall, 41, a keen hill walker from Burnley in Lancashire. The dog had been there for 77 days. For the full story, see **FT55:36**.

KEN BAGNALL/CREATIVE COMMONS

A-Z ALIEN ZOO

KARL SHUKER presents his regular round-up from the crypto-zoological garden



MEXICO'S 'SNAKE WITH LEGS'

In October 2012, I posted on my ShukerNature blog an article of mine documenting the Mexican ajolotes (above) – small but bizarre reptiles resembling pink earthworms but possessing a single pair of short clawed limbs just behind their head. All four species (the best known of which is *Bipes biporus*) are officially confined to northern Mexico's Baja California peninsula – or are they? Shortly after posting my article, I received this fascinating response from a regular ShukerNature reader, with the user name Croconut:

"As you know I live in Mexico, where this reptile is called 'culebra con manitas' – literally, 'a (colubrid) snake with little hands'. I live in a state to the south, far away from the creature's range, but I remember that a few years ago, a biologist (specialist in medically significant venomous animals working for the government) mentioned that he had once found a very strange creature in his garden; he described it as very similar to *Bipes biporus*, but with a short, stunted body, white/pink in colour and with large, paddle-like, digging adapted mole-like forelegs. He was completely baffled by the creature and even said the idea of it being "some kind of mutation" did cross his mind. Unfortunately he didn't show me any photos of it and I don't know if he collected it or preserved it in any way. I didn't get the chance to speak to him again. I've often wondered if what he found was some still unknown southern relative of *Bipes biporus*."

This is the first report of a putative ajolote in southern Mexico that I have encountered. Bearing in mind that these creatures – categorised as amphisbænians or worm-lizards, but distinguished from all others by virtue of their limbs – are reclusive, spending much of their lives underground, it would not be impossible, surely, for an ajolote population, perhaps even an entirely novel fifth species, to exist well beyond the known distribution range. *ShukerNature, http://karlshuker.blogspot.co.uk/2012/10/a-is-for-ajolote-of-tatzelworms-and.html?showComment=1351120060577 25 Oct 2012.*

TASSIE QUEST

In a previous Alien Zoo [**FT295:21**], I documented cryptozoological enthusiast Alan Pringle's recent search on Tasmania for the island's most famous cryptid, the officially extinct thylacine or Tasmanian wolf *Thylacinus cynocephalus*. Here is his news:

"Well I am back and, suffice to say, I didn't see a thylacine but, having now seen much of the island's wilder areas I am even more convinced of their existence and that was without even going anywhere in the vast, uninhabited south-west! The island *teems* with thylacine prey species – wallabies, pademelons, wombats. You only need to look at the amount of road kill. It is totally disproportionate to the traffic on the roads (there isn't any). I had to drive at around 20-25kph [12-16mph] at night or I *would* have hit several things! Also, everyone I casually spoke to about it was quietly optimistic about its existence. I met three people claiming possible sightings and encounters. They did not seem like sensationalists, hoaxers or idiots... I really think, with everyone carrying a phone or digicam these days, it's just a matter of time before the thylacine is confirmed."

We can but hope that he's right, and also that this enigmatic species is sufficiently smart and alert to avoid becoming a road victim itself. Meanwhile, Tasmania's Tassie continues to elude its searchers, but who knows? One night, alongside the road kills of wallabies and wombats, the headlights of a driver with a digicam beside him may just illuminate the form of a large, wolf-shaped, stripy-backed scavenger... *Alan Pringle, pers. comm., 28 Nov 2012.*

NEW JOURNAL

The inaugural volume of the *Journal of Cryptozoology* – the world's only peer-reviewed scientific journal devoted to the subject – is now published. Containing a broad selection of papers covering such subjects as the Queensland tiger and an alleged sea serpent carcase from Orkney, it has attracted positive reviews online and a number of very promising submissions for volume 2. *www.journalofcryptozoology.com accessed 30 Nov 2012.*

● A slab beside Derwent Dam in Derbyshire (left) bears this inscription: "In Commemoration Of The Devotion Of Tip The Sheepdog Which Stayed By The Body Of Her Dead Master, Mr Joseph Tagg, On The Howden Moors For Fifteen Weeks From 12th December 1953 to 27th March 1954." The chapter on 'Faithful Dogs' in *The Rough Guide to Unexplained Phenomena* (2007) by John Michell and Bob Rickard gives other examples, including the tale of Charles Gough's dog found on Helvellyn in the Lake District in 1805, three months after the death of his master, and immortalised by Wordsworth, Landseer and Sir Walter Scott.

● Zander, a seven-year-old husky, tracked down his owner in hospital despite never having been there before. He found John Dolan at New York's Good Samaritan Medical Center four days after he had been admitted for a skin condition. The dog walked under a busy freeway, by a stream and across a four-lane road on the two-mile (3.2km) trek. Dolan had rescued the then-starving dog from an animal shelter five years ago. *MX News (Sydney), 8 Oct 2012.*

● In January 2012, Mark Wessells could no longer keep Buck, his three-year-old Labrador, at his home in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, so he took him to his father's place in Winchester, Virginia, 500 miles (800km) away. Shortly afterwards, Buck went missing, and turned up again in South Carolina several months later, where Brett Gallagher found him wandering near his house. Planning to keep the dog, Gallagher took him to Myrtle Beach's Grand Strand Animal Hospital for shots on 31 August. Veterinarian Amanda Thomas discovered a microchip, which revealed that Wessells, who lives a few miles from the hospital, was the dog's owner. Dr Thomas contacted Wessells right away and he raced over. "It's just crazy [Buck] made it down here on his own," he said. *peoplepets.com, 6 Sept 2012.*

MATT PATTINSON

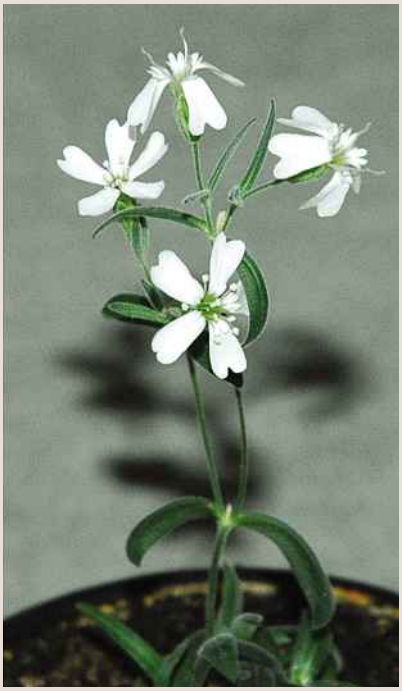
ARCHÆOLOGY

PAUL SIEVEKING on the Arctic flower which bloomed 30,000 years after dying, and some recent culinary discoveries – the world's oldest cooking pot, yoghurt making in the Sahara and ancient chocolate sauce

OLDEST PLANT REVIVAL

Living plants have been generated from the fruit of a little Arctic flower that died about 31,800 years ago, according to a team of Russian scientists. The fruit of the narrow-leafed campion (*Silene stenophylla*) was stored by an Arctic ground squirrel in its burrow on the bank of the Kolyma River, which crosses the tundra of northeastern Siberia, an area that abounded with mammoth and woolly rhinoceros during the last Ice Age. Soon after being dug, the burrows were sealed with windblown earth, buried under 125ft (38m) of sediment and permanently frozen at minus 7˚C (19.4˚F). The fruit's placenta contains high levels of sucrose and phenols, which are good antifreeze agents. The plant still grows in the region, although it is slightly larger than its ancient counterpart. The ancient burrows can store as many as 800,000 seeds, according to the report by Svetlana Yashina and David Gilichinsky of the Russian Academy of Sciences research centre in Pushchino, near Moscow, which appeared in *The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* (21 Feb 2012).

This is by far the oldest plant ever grown from ancient tissue, supported by a firm radiocarbon date. It beats the record held by a date palm grown from a seed some 2,000 years old that was recovered from the ancient fortress of Masada in Israel (above right). Many claims of extreme botanical longevity have failed on closer examination; tales of wheat grown from seeds in the tombs of the pharaohs



have long been discredited. Lupins were germinated from seeds in a 10,000-year-old lemming burrow found by a gold miner in the Yukon; but the seeds, when radiocarbon dated, turned out to be modern contaminants.

The Siberian discovery raises the possibility of reviving other frozen organisms with prehistoric gene pools – and suggests that dormant life found on Mars or other icy planets could possibly be revived. Using a horticultural technique called

micropropagation, the researchers grew 36 plants from fruit tissue in a test tube of nutrients. The ones that grew roots were transferred into pots with soil and light, where they developed flowers and seeds. They appeared identical to the present-day narrow-leafed campion until they flowered, when they produced narrower and more splayed-out petals. Seeds from the ancient plants germinated with 100 per cent success, compared with 90 per cent for seeds from modern campions.

"This is an amazing breakthrough," said Grant Zazula of the Yukon Paleontology Program at Whitehorse in the Yukon Territory of Canada. "I have no doubt in my mind that this is a legitimate claim." It was Dr Zazula who proved that the apparently ancient lupin seeds found in a Yukon lemming burrow were in fact modern. However, many scientists are likely to treat the Russians' claim with reserve until it can be independently confirmed. *NY Times, Sun, 21 Feb; Int. Herald Tribune, Irish Times, 22 Feb 2012.*

WORLD'S OLDEST POTTERY

Fragments of a large pottery bowl found in Xianrendong Cave, in the southern Chinese province of Jiangxi, are 20,000 years old – the oldest pottery ever found. The bowl – reckoned to have been 8in (20cm) high and 6-10in (15-25cm) in diameter – was probably a cauldron to cook food, or possibly to brew alcohol. Until recently, the majority view was that pottery bowls and drink receptacles were invented after the emergence of agriculture, when people began to stay in one place for long periods, but in the past decade researchers have found pottery pre-dating agriculture by up to eight millennia.

One possible reason for the invention of pottery is that 20,000 years ago the Earth was the coldest it had been for a million years, and cauldrons would have enabled hunter-gatherers to extract more nutrition from their food by cooking it. Prof Ofer Bar-Yosef of Harvard University, the lead researcher, believes that whatever they were cooking it was either steamed or boiled. "It's probably not the first wok," he said. "Cooking with oil began later. We think it was used for cooking with water, so it is more like a cauldron… The Chinese kitchen was always based on cooking and steaming; they never made breads, as in other parts of Asia."

Prof Gideon Shelach of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem speculates that there may also have been a social driver for the invention of pottery. "People were gathering together in larger groups and you needed social activities to mitigate against increased tensions," he said. "Maybe those potteries were used to brew alcohol." *Science, BBC News, 28 June 2012.*

DAIRYING IN THE SAHARA

A study of unglazed pottery found at the Takarkori rock shelter in the Tadrart Acacus Mountains of southwest Libya shows that humans in Saharan Africa used cattle for their milk around 7,000 years ago, when the region was becoming dryer, though it was not as arid as it is today. Researchers in Bristol and Rome examined preserved fatty acids held within the fabric of 29 pottery shards and found that half of the vessels had been used for processing dairy fats. This confirms for the first time the early presence of domesticated cattle in the region and the importance of milk to the pastoral people of that era – which is thought to predate the emergence and spread of the gene variants needed for the adult population to digest the lactose found in milk. These variants are estimated to have arisen in Europe about 6,000 years ago. Biomolecular archæologist Richard Evershed, who led the study with archæological scientist Julie Dunne, suggests that making yoghurt may have made dairy products more digestible. *Nature, 2012; 486 (7403); Science Daily, 20 June 2012.*

ANCIENT CHOCOLATE SAUCE

Traces of chemicals considered 'markers' for chocolate have recently been found on fragments of plates dated to 500 BC, which were excavated in 2001 at the Pasa del Macho site on Mexico's Yucatan peninsula. It is the first time ancient chocolate residue has been found on plates rather than cups. Experts have long thought cacao beans and pods were mainly used in pre-Hispanic cultures as a beverage, made either by crushing the beans and mixing them with liquids or fermenting the pulp that surrounds the beans in the pod. Such a drink was believed to have been reserved for an elite. The new evidence suggests that there may be ancient roots for traditional dishes eaten in modern Mexico, such as *mole*, the chocolate sauce often mixed with chillis and served with meats. *Irish Independent, <i>, 4 Aug 2012.*

PEARL FISHING

A natural pearl unearthed at a Neolithic site suggests they were fished 2,500 years earlier than previously thought. French researchers made the find – dating from 5500 BC – in Umm Al Quwain in the United Arab Emirates. The previous oldest pearl, from 3000 BC, was found in Japan. *Metro, 19 June 2012.*

CLASSICAL CORNER

FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

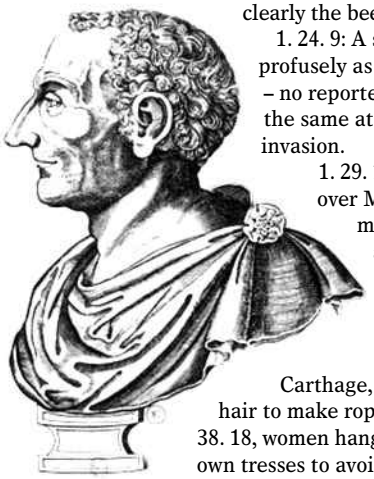
159. ELEMENTARY, MY DEAR FLORUS

"Nothing is less attractive than an Epitome" – Macaulay.

Ed Balls (well-named) and Charles Clarke, the Bill and Ben of British education, did not begin the process of 'dumbing-down'.

Albeit less lethally, this started in Greece and Rome with the epitomisation (from Greek for 'cutting') of large-scale works, either other people's or the slasher's own. Some may have been inspired by poet-librarian Callimachus's (Greece's Philip Larkin) dictum. "Big Book, Big Evil" – I never knew an undergraduate who disagreed. The high cost of ancient book production was another understandable factor. As Johnson (elsewhere more sympathetic) told Boswell, it was "making the cow have a calf", whilst Shelley unimprovably remarked that "Epitomes are the moths of just history; they eat the poetry out of it."

Florus (second-century AD) has until recently had a bad press: "It is hard to find another Latin writer so utterly empty-headed" (FRD Goodyear, *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*). There are signs of reappraisal: "An author far less vapid than most modern scholars often assume" (Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph*).



Our man produced a two-book abridgement of Livy and other sources narrating Rome's military victories from earliest times to Augustus. In omitting more recent history, Florus has been compared to Dickens's *A Child's History of England*. Indeed, he may have intended his 'cadet version' for the classroom, its actual destiny as late as the 17th century (six editions 1638-74 from the Elzevir Press alone). Healthy schoolboys would certainly have enjoyed its blood-and-guts tales of Roman imperial derring-do, ancestors of the yarns I was brought up on by the likes of Gunby Hadath, GH Henty, and the boys' comics and patriotic tracts so memorably excoriated by George Orwell ("England is always right and England always wins" – change England to Rome and you have Florus in a nutshell).

At a higher level, some think he invented a new genre of panegyric, combining prose with poetry. Certainly, there are discernible echoes of Virgil and Lucan to balance what Quintilian dubbed "Livy's milky richness". Overall, he writes like a tabloid reporter on speed, with his constant verbal ejaculations spicing up the style and gruesome atrocity stories hotting up the content.

He sidles into this column with the following offbeat items – all references by book/chapter/paragraph numbers. Significantly or not, virtually all are in book one from the remoter past. There is a Loeb English translation by JC Rolfe.

1. 1. 7: Scouting for a site for Rome, Remus was guided by six vultures, trumped by twin Romulus's 12.

1. 8. 20: A crow landed on the head of general Valerius during battle.

1. 14. 19: An earthquake occurred during a battle, without halting it.

1. 18. 20: An enormous snake attacked the Roman camp in Africa (First Punic War).

1. 22. 14: The critical loss to Hannibal at Lake Trasimene (217 BC) was presaged by an earthquake and a swarm of bees landing on the legionary Eagle standards, which almost defied attempts to pull them from the ground – Apian swarms recur at 2. 16. 7 – Florus clearly the bees' knees.

1. 24. 9: A statue of Apollo sweated profusely as the Romans invaded Syria – no reported sign of Saddam's doing the same at the Anglo-American invasion.

1. 29. 15: The Roman victory over Macedonia was first made known through an apparition of two ghostly youths, covered with blood and dust and out of breath.

1. 31. 10: In besieged Carthage, the women cut off their hair to make ropes for the catapults; at 1. 38. 18, women hanged themselves with their own tresses to avoid capture and rape – hair today, gone tomorrow.

2. 7. 5: Slave revolt leader Eunus impressed his followers by emitting flames from his mouth, having therein secreted a nut filled with sulphur and fire. At 2. 26. 11, a "barbarously stupid" centurion terrified the tribal enemy by balancing a pan of live coals on his helmet, fanning them into flames by his body movement – I recommend this technique (perhaps barbarous but hardly stupid since it worked) to EPL strikers.

2. 22. 5: Having lost all their weapons in action, Alpine tribeswomen dashed their infants to death on the ground and hurled them into the faces of the Roman soldiers – can imagine what the Health & Safety Executive would have to say about that...

"Even the abridger must not be rashly doomed to annihilation" – Samuel Johnson, *Rambler* 145.

NECROLOG

This month, we bid farewell to a legendary gadfly of the UFO world and a research chemist whose work on cold fusion saw him at odds with the scientific establishment

NICK REDFERN

JAMES W MOSELEY

Years ago, I observed of James W Moseley: "Over the years he has entertained just about every view it is possible to hold about UFOs, without ever managing to say anything especially interesting or memorable about any of them." Which is to say that those who sought ufological wisdom from that quarter found themselves on a fool's errand; but that was not the standard by which his unique career is to be assessed. Though manifestly intelligent, he possessed no discernible intellectual curiosity. A good writer, he wrote little of enduring value. Though his career on the UFO scene reached back to the 1950s, he had no profound insights to offer about ufology's formative years, as his mostly unenlightening memoir, *Shockingly Close to the Truth!* (2002, co-written with the late Karl T Pflock), attests. Yet Moseley was acquainted with just about everybody who knew anything about the UFO subculture, and nearly everybody had an opinion about him. And nearly everybody read him.

He was the son of the notorious American fascist General George Van Horn Moseley (1874-1960). Son regarded father without affection, and his own politics, such as they were, leaned to the liberal, tolerant, and Democratic. An inheritance freed him to do what he wished without 9-to-5 distractions, though he would dabble in business on occasion. His early enthusiasms included amateur archæology, which led him to spend time at sites in Peru. He founded the UFO zine *Nexus* in 1954, retitling it *Saucer News* the following year. If it made one lasting contribution to the evolving field, it was its well-researched exposé of the notorious California contactee George Adamski.

Always well edited and eminently readable, *Saucer News* was the most freewheeling UFO periodical of its time, or perhaps any time. It lambasted contactees and more sober ufologists alike. If the content was not always rigorously fact-checked or considered, it was invariably lively and often hilarious. One thing *Saucer News* never did was bore its readers.

Moseley participated in countless feuds, the most infamous a pretend one with best friend and rival saucer publisher Gray Barker. With Barker one alcohol-fuelled night in 1957, he forged letters on US State Department stationery and mailed them to a number of prominent UFO personalities. Only one bit, and that was a big fish: Adamski himself, who believed – or anyway claimed to believe – that "R. E. Straith" of the "Cultural Exchange Committee" had affirmed the department's support for his space contacts.

In 1968 Moseley sold *Saucer News* to Barker, who folded it two years later. Moseley devoted his time to organising the National UFO Conference – essentially an excuse for an annual get-together with saucer-inclined drinking buddies – and lecturing. In 1976 he resumed publishing, this time with a monthly eight-page newsletter issued under various titles before settling on *Saucer Smear.* The last issue appeared a few weeks before his death.

As with *News, Smear*'s subject was not so much UFOs as the UFO-based social world that doubled as Moseley's social world. In Key West, where he moved in the early 1980s from New Jersey, he was largely a reclusive figure except to visitors and communicants from ufology. His life revolved around *Smear,* whose pages in characteristic Moseley fashion praised and damned, mostly the latter. Though more than willing to dish it out, Moseley was thin-skinned when criticised in return. But in the end, except for bruised feelings, no lasting harm was done. In America, if not elsewhere (where observers tended to take him more seriously than he took himself), Moseley was seen simply as a longtime feature of the landscape and indulged as such. While often mistaken for one, Moseley was no skeptic. To the extent that he thought about UFOs as such, he judged they are likely to be extradimensional. He dismissed actual skeptics as bores or worse.

If one word were to sum up his career, "gadfly" is as good as any. He and I were good friends – we were in regular touch till nearly the very end – and he had many others. All of us will miss him. Nobody will replace him.

James Willett Moseley, ufological journalist, born New York City 4 Aug 1931; died Miami, Florida 16 Nov 2012, aged 81.

Jerome Clark

MARTIN FLEISCHMANN

On 23 March 1989, at an extraordinary press conference sponsored by the University of Utah, research chemists Martin Fleischmann and Stanley Pons announced that they had created a controlled nuclear fusion reaction in a glass cell that generated four times more energy than was put in. The implication was that this was the dawn of an age of "inexhaustible and cheap energy" with no deleterious effects on the environment. The chemists were featured on the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek*, as excited news media around the world hailed their achievement with the term 'Cold Fusion'.

Reaction from the scientific community, especially the scientific press, was sceptical to say the least. Attempts to replicate their experiments at Harwell, MIT and Caltech failed. Yes, there were minor and sporadic traces of excess heat, but crucially there were no signs of the neutrons to be expected from such a nuclear process. When a report from the US Department of Energy laboratory likewise found no evidence for the effect, Fleischmann and Pons were given a hostile reception at a meeting of the American Physical Society that May.

When their paper was eventually published, both electrochemists and physicists criticised it as "sloppy" and "uninformative". In his 1990 book *Too Hot to Handle*, Professor Frank Close, head of theoretical physics at the Rutherford labs, criticised the pair for a "a delusion, an error [and] fraud". In 1995 the Italian paper *La Repubblica* also accused them of fraud. Pons and Fleischmann sued – and lost.

Martin Fleischmann was born in Czechoslovakia and his family fled the Nazis to settle in England in 1938. He received a PhD in chemistry from Imperial College London in 1950 and went into teaching, first at Newcastle University, then in 1967 moving to Southampton University as professor of electrochemistry. He retired from teaching in 1982, taking research fellowships at Southampton in 1983, and at the University of Utah in 1988. He was made a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1986. Alan Bewick, a Southampton chemistry professor, told the *New York Times* in 1989 that Fleischmann was "more innovative than any other electrochemist in the world."

He had been interested in the chemistry of palladium and hydrogen since his Imperial College days, and at Utah he teamed up with former research student Stanley Pons to investigate whether nuclear fusion could be achieved through electrochemical means at room temperature using heavy water (deuterium). According to Fleischmann, their first indication of success came in

1985. Returning to the lab where an experiment had been left running for months, they found the rig had burned itself through the workbench and lay in a crater in the concrete floor below. They calculated that their cell had produced a huge burst of energy that could only have come from fusion.

Fleischmann wanted to publish it first in an obscure journal and was prepared to co-author a paper with a group from another university. At this point, University of Utah officials intervened, allegedly because they wanted to establish priority over the discovery and its patents by pre-empting any other publication. Fleischmann said later – on *60 Minutes* (19 April 2009) – that he regretted being railroaded into making that public announcement prematurely. This was certainly the cause of much establishment hostility towards them; they had broken a golden rule that publication in a scientific journal should come before any public claims. The reason they had no choice but to comply, Fleischmann insisted, was that they had spent $100,000 of their own money on the project and had to secure a research grant before a similar project at Brigham Young University.

Fleischmann also regretted the media term 'Cold Fusion', preferring to call his process "a sustained nuclear fusion reaction". Cold fusion – that is, fusion at temperatures far less than those inside stars – was widely thought to be impossible and therefore claims to that effect would inevitably be ridiculed.

However, Fleischmann and Pons remained confident that their process was authentic, if erratic. In 1992, they relocated to France to pursue their quest at the IMRA laboratory (a subsidiary of Toyota). They continued to attract supporters, and co-authored papers with researchers from the US Navy and Italian national laboratories, some of whom were bolstered by positive (but hardly comparable) results of their own.

In 1995, Fleischmann finally retired and returned to England; the IMRA lab closed three years later. He was no longer speaking to Pons, who is believed to have taken French citizenship and to be living as a recluse.

Martin Fleischmann, electrochemist, born Karlovy Vary (Carlsbad), Czechoslovakia 29 Mar 1927; died England 3 Aug 2012, aged 85.

STRANGE DEATHS

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

At 7.55am on 9 September, the body of a man landed in Portman Avenue, Mortlake, southwest London, about 10 miles (16km) from Heathrow Airport. There were body parts strewn over 90ft (27m) and pools of blood. Annie William, a resident, said: "I heard a monstrous bang. I thought someone had been hit by a car." The dead man, wearing jeans, a hoodie and trainers and aged between 20 and 30, was believed to be North African (or possibly Angolan). He had stowed away in a plane's landing gear and fallen 2,000ft (600m) when the wheels were lowered. It was likely he had been dead for the entire journey, either crushed by retracting landing gear or frozen in temperatures of up to minus 40˚C (minus 40˚F). Not long before, on 23 August, a stowaway from Cape Town was found dead in the landing gear bay of a Boeing 747 at Heathrow.

"I don't know of anyone who has survived being stowed away on a long-haul flight," said Richard Taylor from the Civil Aviation Authority – but the Gang of Fort knows of at least two. In 1996, Vijay Saini, 19, died after falling 2,000ft from a DC9 jet over Richmond as it approached Heathrow, but his brother Pardeep, 22, survived the 10-hour journey from Delhi in freezing temperatures. Another aerial stowaway survivor was Andrei Cluea, 20, from Romania, who fell out of the landing gear of a Boeing 747 from Vienna as it touched down at Heathrow in 2010.

In 2001, a man fell from a British Airways Boeing 777 that was heading for Heathrow. His body landed in a Homebase car park in Richmond. In December 2000, the bodies of two men were found in farmland near Gatwick Airport after falling from the undercarriages of two different planes. In some instances, bodies have remained for several flights after become lodged in the undercarriage bay. Because the space is so small, the bodies can become jammed and tumble out several days later, dislodged by a bumpy landing or turbulence. *<i> 24 Aug; D.Telegraph, 11+13 Sept; Guardian, Metro, Sun, 11 Sept 2012.*

Lynette Nock died on 28 April after taking the recreational drug GBL during a wake for her friend Carl Fearon, 24, an electrical engineer, who was killed by the same drug earlier that same day. His body had been found in a Birmingham flat at 1.15pm, having apparently collapsed after taking GBL the previous night. Ambulance crews were called to the wake at 9.04pm after Nock, a 28-year-old accountant, and two male friends collapsed. Nock died in hospital while her friends recovered. GBL (Gamma-Butyrolactone), said to have an effect similar to Ecstasy, is a solvent found in paint strippers and used to clean alloy wheels. Banned in the UK in 2009, it can be obtained online from Europe for its intended use as an industrial cleaner. *D.Telegraph, Metro, 2 May; D.Mirror, 5 May 2012.*

A US man was charged with murder after shooting his uncle during an argument over pork. John Cunningham, 43, called the meat pork steaks as they prepared to cook it, but his uncle, Lessie Lowe, 44, insisted they were pork *chops*. St Louis police said that Cunningham grabbed a shotgun and shot Lowe, who later died in hospital. *MX News (Sydney), 14 Sept 2012.*

Guests who celebrated a wedding near Abqaiq, a centre of the Saudi energy industry, on 30 October by firing their guns in the air ended up killing 23 people. Their shooting brought down an electric cable, which fell on a metal door. All the dead were from the same tribe; 30 others were injured. It was only a month after Saudi Arabia banned the shooting of firearms at weddings, a popular tradition in tribal areas of the country. *D.Telegraph, D.Mail, 1 Nov 2012.*

An unnamed mother from the Musur hill tribe in Mae Ai (Thailand's northernmost district of Chiang Mai) was accused of killing, cooking and eating her sons aged one and five, because she thought they were pigs. According to the *Bangkok Post*, police found the woman asleep with several body parts strewn around her. It turned out she had been treated for mental illness since 2007 and her husband said she had stopped taking her medicine one or two months before the tragedy. A hospital report said she suffered from hallucinations and thought someone was coming to hurt her. She was charged with murder but, being deemed mentally unfit to stand trial, she was sent to Suan Prung Hospital. *Bangkok Post, 20+21 Aug 2012.*

THE FORTEAN TIMES BOOK OF STRANGE DEATHS VOL 2

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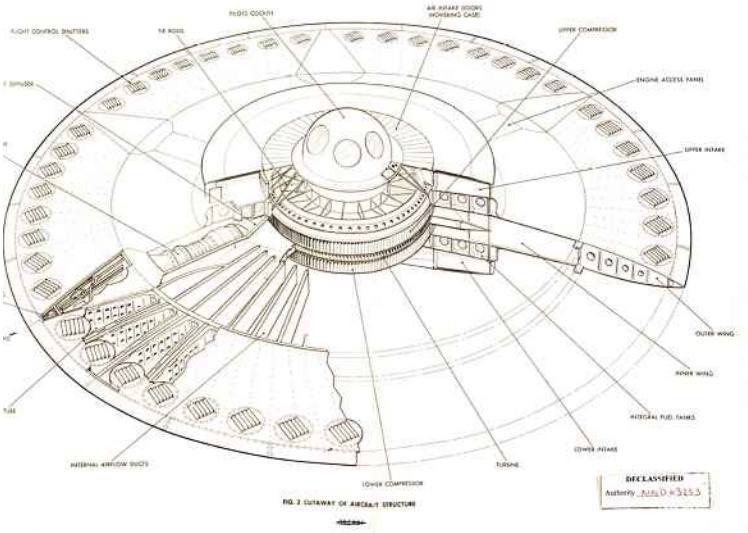
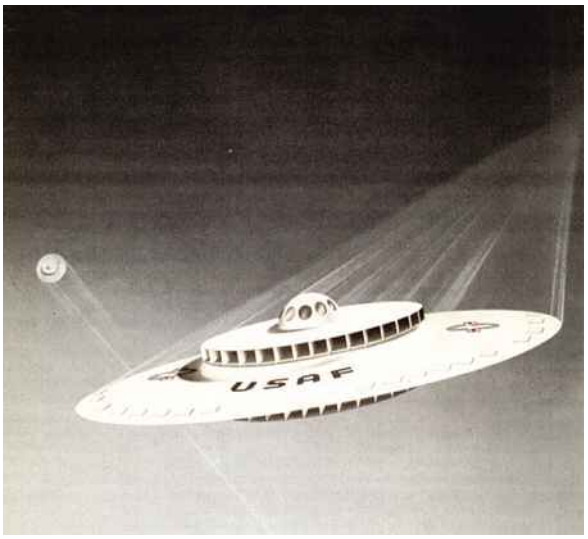
FLYINGSAUCERY

ANDY ROBERTS & DR DAVID CLARKE PRESENT THEIR REGULAR SURVEY OF THE LATEST FADS AND FLAPS FROM THE WORLD OF UFOLOGY





US NATIONAL ARCHIVES

ABOVE: A cutaway drawing and artist's rendition of the planned 'saucer' from the 'USAF Project 1794, Final Development Summary Report' of 1956.

HOW TO BUILD A FLYING SAUCER

During the 1950s some forward-thinking engineers, such as Britain's John Frost, believed the development of saucer-shaped aircraft would be the next big technological leap for aeronautics. Frost's brainchild was a futuristic prototype flying disc that was secretly built in a Canadian hangar during 1953 at the height of the Cold War UFO scare. But despite backing from Churchill's son-in-law, Duncan Sandys, the British government was unimpressed and allowed the US Air Force to take over the project. In September 2012, the US National Archives released some never-before-seen images from 'USAF Project 1794, Final Development Summary Report' dated 1956. The file reveals the USAF contracted Canadian company Avro to construct a disc-shaped craft capable of vertical take off and landing. Millions of dollars were sunk into the prototype which the company optimistically predicted would reach a top speed of Mach 4 (2,600mph) with a ceiling of over 100,000ft that would have sent it spinning into the stratosphere. But tests of other disc-shaped craft, such as the Avro-car, revealed the design was unstable. The project was cancelled but remained Top Secret for 60 years. Of course, if you are conspiratorially minded, this was just a cover story and the USAF continued to build and fly UFOs with help from aliens. Far more interesting to us is the strong resemblance between the 'prototypes' in the file and the flying saucers depicted in science fiction films and 'seen' in the sky. Life does indeed imitate art. http://blogs.archives.gov/ndc/?p=426

IF YOU GO DOWN...

The Rendlesham Forest incident is ufology's answer to older traditions of entering the wild woods to experience the 'otherworld': a dark forest at night ticks all the right boxes, particularly if there is a strange pulsing light to be seen. So it was that on 5 November 2012, Adrian Musat, gazing out from the window of his house in Pitlochry, Scotland, noticed a diamond-shaped luminous object in the sky above the Clunie Forest. The night was clear and there was no noise. The 'UFO' hovered and appeared to pulsate and Musat, a 40-year-old Romanian chef, managed to capture five minutes of footage. Quizzed by the BBC he admitted he had watched "many movies and looked at websites" and had sent the images to BUFORA for analysis "hoping for a positive result". Sadly for him, analysis showed the light was within the trees, not above them. And soon afterwards the Forestry Commission Scotland confirmed that tree-felling operations were underway in the woodland at the time. The 'UFO' was identified as the cab-mounted spotlight of a harvester. The analogies with Rendlesham are obvious. But before it became an IFO the local and national media had begun drawing analogies with the diamond-shaped UFO photographed over the A9 at Pitlochry in 1990 (see **FT248:28**). Mr Musat's footage is on BBC News Scotland's website: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-20316258

THE FLORIDA ENIGMA

A UFO seen by six witnesses at Casselberry in Florida is emblematic of the continuing enigma of how apparently unequivocal multi-witness sightings constantly elude explanation. On the evening of 24 November, the primary witness saw a huge object hovering low above her house. Her testimony, collected by MUFON members, was clear: "What I saw was the most bizarre sight I have ever seen in my life... Just a little past and above the house (about 50-100ft/15-30m in the air), was a UFO. It had two red/orange wing lights, and a matching nose light. I could faintly make out the shape, and it appeared to be a dark triangular shape that was slightly darker than the horizon. The object hovered for a few minutes, which made the witness think it could be "observing, or collecting data", before slowly moving silently away. Photos were taken, but showed only dark sky. What to make of sightings like these? Why didn't others in the area report it? Would an extraterrestrial object really have wing and nose lights as terrestrial craft do? Can six people really misperceive a conventional craft in this manner? It's cases such as this which keep flyingsaucery interested in the subject.

JENNY RANDLES SUGGESTS IT'S TIME UFOLOGY DUMPED ITS EXTRATERRESTRIAL BAGGAGE

ALIEN END GAME?

In a recent issue (**FT295:29**) I discussed the concept of a mind-effecting 'sphere of influence' surrounding close encounters. Since then, several readers have asked me if that means 'aliens' are now redundant as the cause of UFO evidence and the media has engaged in a debate over the 'death of ufology' (though sightings of UFOs have been around for centuries and are likely going nowhere). My take goes like this:

There may be no spaceships from outer space to reveal, but there is still strong evidence for physically real phenomena in our atmosphere that are far from understood. And the irony is that these things could make genuine contributions to science if we got our acts together and channelled our efforts into tracking, recording and comprehending them – instead of sitting around waiting for the intergalactic cavalry to arrive in their Roswell starship.

Ufology is no more dead than it ever was. It has, though, matured somewhat. There have always been thousands of people who happily blame government cover-ups, unseen alien forces, or whatever, for the fact that we do *not* know the truth, and who demand that this be handed over to them. This is a galactic cop-out, so to speak. Perhaps some of those people have finally got fed up and gone away; if so, then we are all the better for it.

Comments like these, though, are largely ignored by the media, so I will explain what I mean and why the key question is: *Do we need the concept of aliens in the modern UFO pantheon or are these beings just a space age equivalent of the dragon and the fairy – a once culturally relevant motif that suited a particular time and place from which we have since moved on?*

It seems widely accepted that UFO research is at a crossroads (first mooted in the prescient pages of this magazine: **FT259:29**). Some prosaic predictions back then are already coming true. But I suspect this latest 'crisis' will be shortlived and deflated by the universal resilience of the UFO brand and the insatiable human urge for companionship in the cosmos. All come together around that hot potato of 'alien evidence' and whether we should stick with it as a working theory or ditch it and look elsewhere.

In the mass media little has changed, since UFOs and alien spaceships have always been widely misconceived as synonymous. On 2 December the *Sun* had an eight-page pull-out devoted to UFOs with a familiar timeless summary of tales of alien sightings. On the same day, a Channel 4 documentary explored possible 'alien bodies' discovered around the world. We might suspect that if there *were* proof that any of these (undoubtedly interesting) 'remains' were beings from another planet then it would not need the *Sun* or Channel 4 to reveal the news. Someone would have won a Nobel Prize by now.

Of course, such evidence needs investigation and keeping an open mind is the right course to adopt. Mounting evidence from deep space astronomy and Martian probes

DAVID MCNEW / GETTY IMAGES

Are aliens now redundant as the cause of UFO evidence?

indicates that alien life is more likely than ever – though that life getting here is another matter. So, impossibility is not the basis of my argument against alien UFOs, not when future tech will surely mitigate against the vast gulfs of space that restrain us for now. My reasons for suggesting that we should call an end to the presumption that UFOs are alien craft are hopefully more cogent.

For a start, should there not be visual evidence of alien technology if they are coming here as often as alleged? There are hundreds of thousands of still and video images of UFOs. Most sightings, of course, are misperceptions as well as blobs of light. But if we agree that five per cent of cases remain unsolved, then that should mean several thousand interesting photographs.

If we consider the percentage of UFO cases with alleged alien presence then I reckon we should expect somewhere in the region of about three per cent of photographs to offer unequivocal evidence of that kind. But, instead, this evidence is almost non-existent. UFOs are a globally reported phenomenon seen by far more people than allege to have seen lake monsters. Yet film of lake monsters is, if anything, more convincing than that of aliens.

Modern technology has brought an explosion of mobile phone imagery showing lights in the sky. But this follows the same trend. There is no similar increase in the levels of alien photography. There has been a small rise, but any glance at what is out there reveals use of CGI and other accessible means of creating superficially convincing hoaxes. The gameplay of fakery has become common; persuasive examples of aliens or their technology captured on film have not.

Another oddity is that reports of 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind' have fallen off a cliff. Between the 1940s and 1970s, reports of aliens alongside or inside UFOs formed most alien contact. A dramatic rise in claims of abduction followed. By the 1990s, these were the majority of reported alien contacts and CE 3s were vanishing. Today, abductions are far fewer and CE3s are all but gone.

The lack of physical evidence of non-terrestrial presence on Earth is also stark. There have been no living dinosaurs for tens of millions of years, but physical evidence is all around. Yet in the rare alien contact where DNA is analysed (for example, an incident in Australia in 1992) the results showed that the 'alien' was from Earth. Admittedly, the DNA was of an intriguingly rare Chinese Mongoloid source that poses many questions – but it was not alien.

Even the names that the aliens claim are too humanised. Known intelligent creatures such as dolphins communicate with complex sounds. Yet instead of an alien having a phonetic name like Zleeep we have romantic ones like Aura Rhanes or Semjase. These seem more at home in an episode of *Star Trek* – or, perhaps more importantly, in the human depths of our shared imagination.

Of course, I would be delighted if powerful alien evidence were to appear. It would be a breakthrough in human knowledge and vindicate my years of research if ufology *did* make history. However, the signs are not promising, and there comes a point when optimism must be tempered by realism.

This does not make UFO research meaningless. We can retrain our thinking and look elsewhere for answers beyond the cliché of alien visitors. Real aliens likely *are* out there, but I believe that astronomers will find proof of them, not ufologists.

Instead, there is real potential to make discoveries in areas such as the nature of consciousness, and rare atmospheric energy sources to tame and use as a future resource. But we will only find these if we look in the right places – and we will only look if we lay aside our frustrating quest for beings that, in the end, appear to be illusory. We should instead call an end game to that quest and search for the true cause of puzzling UFOs.

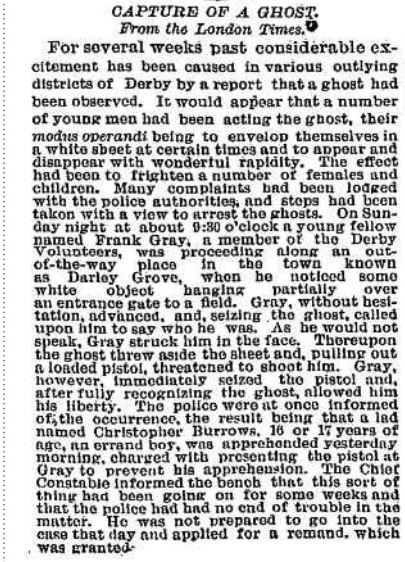
SPURIOUS SPIRITS

JACOB MIDDLETON looks back at the largely forgotten Victorian activity of ghost impersonation and asks what this bizarre pastime can tell us about changing attitudes to the supernatural in an era of rapid social transformation

It was on the evening of 27 September 1885 that a young man named Frank Grey went for a walk with his sweetheart, Isabella Scanlan, on the fringes of the English town of Derby. Grey and Scanlan had chosen to promenade on Darley Grove, a quiet, leafy lane, far from the town centre. It was a local beauty spot, overlooking the river Derwent, and leading to the old grounds of Darley Abbey, a place popular with courting couples and those people who wished to escape the bustle of the town.

This particular evening would prove to be an eventful one for Grey and Scanlan; as they walked through the grove, they spied a ghostly figure standing in a shady spot by a gate. For the past six weeks rumours had swept through Derby about an apparition that was said to be haunting the town. The supposed ghost had appeared in the late evenings, pouncing upon unwary pedestrians and making varied forms of mischief. The sight of the figure in Darley Grove suggested to Grey and Scanlan that they had come face-to-face with the subject of Derby's gossip.

Grey's response to the situation, however, suggests that the ghost didn't project a particularly fearful presence, for the young man approached it and asked it as to its business. When the phantom did not respond, Grey struck it round the head twice. This drew a somewhat surprising reaction, as the ghost reached into its costume and pulled out a loaded revolver. Not to be deterred, even by a firearm, Grey fell upon the figure; a struggle ensued, which ended with Grey in possession of the pistol, and the ghost taking to its heels. [1]



CAPTURE OF A GHOST.
From the London Times.

For several weeks past considerable excitement has been caused in various outlying districts of Derby by a report that a ghost had been observed. It would appear that a number of young men had been acting the ghost, their *modus operandi* being to envelop themselves in a white sheet at certain times and to appear and disappear with wonderful rapidity. The effect had been to frighten a number of females and children. Many complaints had been lodged with the police authorities, and steps had been taken with a view to arrest the ghosts. On Sunday night at about 9:30 o'clock a young fellow named Frank Gray, a member of the Derby Volunteers, was proceeding along an out-of-the-way place in the town known as Darley Grove, when he noticed some white object hanging partially over an entrance gate to a field. Gray, without hesitation, advanced, and, seizing the ghost, called upon him to say who he was. As he would not speak, Gray struck him in the face. Thereupon the ghost threw aside the sheet and, pulling out a loaded pistol, threatened to shoot him. Gray, however, immediately seized the pistol and, after fully recognising the ghost, allowed him his liberty. The police were at once informed of the occurrence, the result being that a lad named Christopher Burrows, 16 or 17 years of age, an errand boy, was apprehended yesterday morning, charged with presenting the pistol at Gray to prevent his apprehension. The Chief Constable informed the bench that this sort of thing had been going on for some weeks and that the police had had no end of trouble in the matter. He was not prepared to go into the case that day and applied for a remand, which was granted.

THE GHOST REACHED INTO ITS COSTUME AND DREW A REVOLVER

FACING PAGE: The shrouded figure of popular lore was easily mimicked by using a white sheet.
LEFT: A newspaper report on the Derby 'ghost'.

The story of the 'ghost with the revolver' became a brief media sensation throughout Britain, and newspaper readers were amused and amazed at the story, which was at once sensational and ridiculous. "If this represents the average conduct of the dwellers in the World of Shadows," noted one magazine, "the Psychical Society must be careful how it carries out its enquiries." [2] The ghost was eventually tracked down and was revealed to have been a young man named Christopher Burrows; he was charged with firearms offences and narrowly escaped prison. [3]

The ghost scare in Derby lasted no more than a few weeks in the late summer of 1885, and was quickly forgotten, even in the town itself. Yet the events were representative of a widespread Victorian social phenomenon – that of ghost impersonation. Whilst largely forgotten today, this was a common activity which gives us insights into perceptions of the supernatural during the Victorian era.

A Nation Plagued by Spirits

The act of dressing up as a ghost, and wandering the night-time streets for the purposes of scaring lone pedestrians, is

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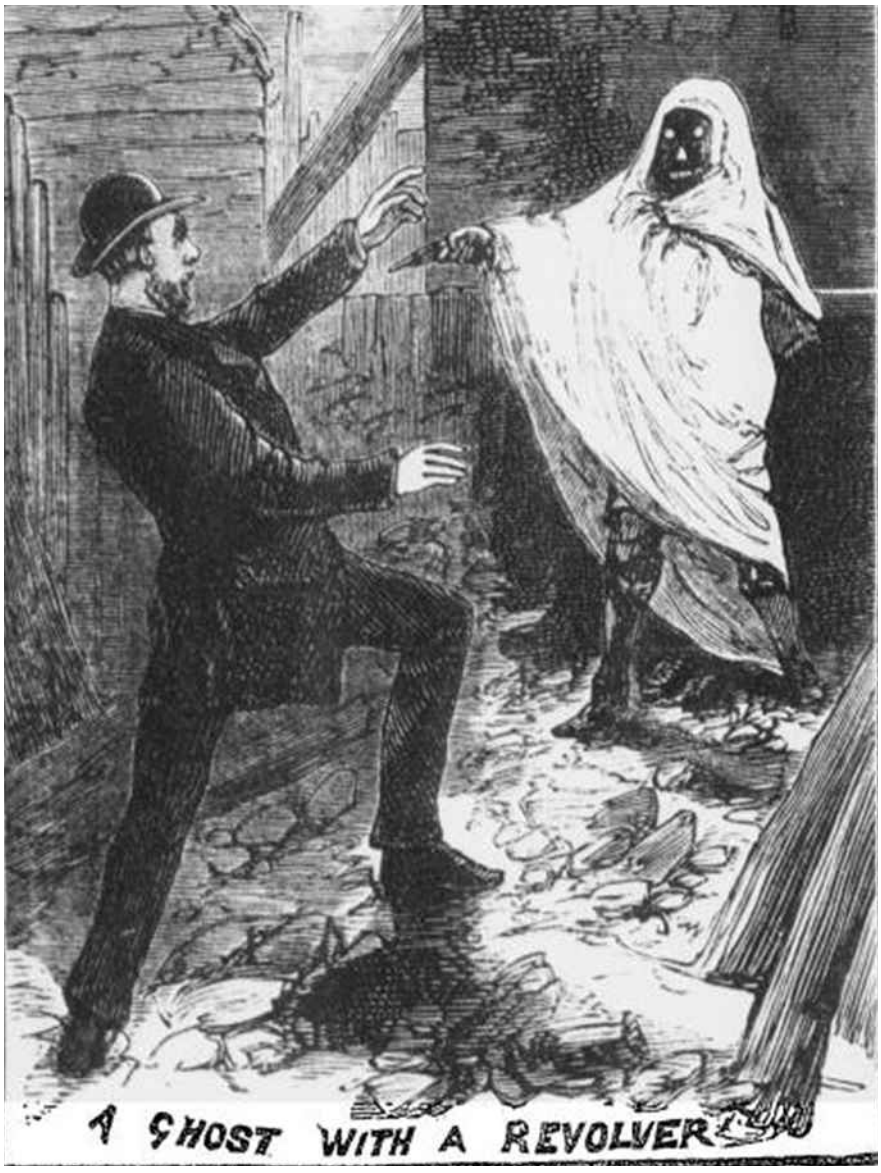
a practice with a longstanding history. It's likely that for as long as people have believed in spirits, unscrupulous individuals have taken on their guise for a variety of purposes. [4] However, the practice was particularly common during the Victorian era, with hundreds of cases being reported throughout the period. Typically, rumours of ghostly activity would surface around the later autumn or early winter. These would tell of phantoms prowling around the churchyards and lanes at the edges of towns and villages; often, the ghosts were reported as particularly favouring the lonely and under-lit urban fringes of settlements. Thus, as one writer noted about the preferred haunt of the Derby Ghost: "It is a most favourable spot for a ghost, one side being a tall wood fence… and the other a hedge backed by tall umbrageous fruit trees, which make a sort of roof over the footway, and keep out the light in such a way that one has only to walk up there in the dark and think of ghosts to enjoy that peculiar sensation known as the 'creeps'." [5]

Such eerie spots were chosen by impersonators to heighten the impression which they might make on their victims; even if the apparitions were generally believed to be nothing more than a man in a sheet, the appearance of a ghostly figure in a darkened lane could still be genuinely unnerving. The effect could, moreover, be amplified by a careful choice of target. Thus, when the Stonehaven Ghost was active in the Scottish town in the winter of 1899, it was complained that the person responsible, "with the cowardliness characteristic of those assuming such a role, is said to appear only to women and children". [6] Such behaviour was not untypical, and many ghost impersonators sought out those people who they thought would be most easily frightened. [7]

The ultimate effect of ghostly manifestations in a given area was a general atmosphere of fear and apprehension. As the night drew in, people would shut themselves away indoors, anxious to avoid becoming the next victim of a particular roaming spectre. Such behaviour was reported throughout the 19th century. When, in 1895, a ghost was reported as stalking a number of villages in the vicinity of Windsor Forest, it was said that the local people were "all afraid to go out after dark, and the road is entirely deserted". [8] The prospect of meeting a ghost could have a direct effect upon the lives of those who lived in an afflicted area.



ABOVE: The Derby 'ghost with a revolver', as seen in the *Illustrated Police News* of 10 October 1885.

Hunting Ghosts

Although the activities of ghost impersonators were greeted with a considerable amount of consternation from the general public, it's important to note that few people believed that these were genuine wandering spirits. In fact, both press and public thought that the ghosts that prowled around the streets at night were invariably men in disguise. This often led to a communal response in which gangs of people took to the streets after nightfall, in an attempt to track down those responsible (see **FT296:42-45**). In the case of the Derby Ghost, crowds assembled in the vicinity of earlier sightings, in an attempt to seek out the apparition. [9] A few years earlier, reports of a ghost impersonator in the vicinity of Windsor met with a similar response, with a group of men armed with horse-whips keeping a nightly vigil, intending, if they caught the person responsible, "to administer such a castigation as he will remember to the day of his death". [10] Occasionally, such groups were successful in their aims. In 1894, for instance, a search party in the village of West Stafford in Dorset located a prowling ghost which had been haunting the area, and administered a severe beating; the supposed ghost turned out to be a local labourer whose own wife had joined in the attack. [11] Another sham apparition, active in Shrewsbury in 1888, narrowly avoided the same fate. The local people, upset by the "dangerous pranks" to which they had been subjected, formed a mob, and effected the capture of the Welsh farmer who had been responsible; although their natural inclination was to lynch the culprit, they were persuaded to release him after he provided a donation of £5, then a considerable sum, to the Salop Infirmary. [12]

However, not all such ghost hunts were successful, and in a few cases the activities of an apparition could extend over a considerable period of time. In these situations the stories told about these spectres frequently evolved, as eyewitness accounts were conflated and embellished, and the phantoms attained mythical proportions. In 1874, a ghost was reported to be prowling the vicinity of Salisbury Park in Wrexham; this was rumoured to be a dangerous and violent spirit, who was said to have waylaid and

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ABOVE: Rural superstition and belief in ghosts is mocked in this 1865 slide in the London Stereoscopic Company's Comic Series.

seriously assaulted a lone traveller. The stories of this ghost developed, and it was variously claimed that it was mounted on stilts, or able to clear a field in a single stride, or else was a "black man" who "was in the habit of crouching under a wall waiting for his victims". [13] Equally ominous were the stories told about the Briton Ferry Ghost, 25 years later, which stalked around the vicinity of Giant's Grave in Neath. One newspaper noted that, after having been able to carry out its depredations unmolested for some time, the ghost "has now assumed the proportions of a huge man", no doubt largely in the minds of the fearful local people. [14] The inhabitants of Briton Ferry formed search parties in an attempt to track down the miscreant responsible for the ghost's activities. It remained elusive, however, and evaded all attempts at capture.

The stories of the ghosts at Wrexham and Briton Ferry show that, even when there was an assumption that particular spirits were the product of a hoax, they could still exert a fearful influence over the areas they haunted. The fear of ghosts ran deep, even in what were seen as the rational and enlightened times of the 19th century.

A World of Wandering Spirits

One of the most notable features of Victorian ghost impersonation was that it drew upon traditional rural notions of wandering spirits. By the beginning of the 19th century, a growing literary tradition of ghosts had established, amongst the educated classes, certain preconceptions about how ghosts should behave. These included the idea that ghosts were purposeful entities, which appeared to impart messages from beyond the grave, or existed to mark the spot of some heinous crime. [15] Yet, whilst these apparitions feature prominently in histories of supernatural belief, they bear little resemblance to the restless spirits of everyday ghost belief. For many people in pre-industrial Britain, apparitions were purposeless entities which, in the words of one 18th-century clergyman, were prone to roam "about the World, from the dead hour of Night, when all Things are buried in Sleep and Darkness, till the Time of Cock-crowing", when they departed. [16] Belief in these wandering spirits was retained well into the 19th century. For instance, one agricultural worker recalled how, in his youth in the late Victorian period, the fear of ghosts might be all-consuming. As he noted: "The working day began at six o'clock, and the lonely walk of two miles through the dark lanes in the winter mornings constituted the greatest horror of my young life. I was born in an ignorant and superstitious age, and the minds of children were systematically terrified by crude and wicked stories concerning troubled ghosts and malignant spirits. Consequently, the slightest noise of unseen bird or beast in those dark lanes filled me with terror, and I imagined that every tree or dark corner sheltered distressed and prowling creatures of the spirit world." [17]

> THE GHOST TURNED OUT TO BE A LOCAL LABOURER

Such beliefs were also recorded by the folklorists of the period, who noted how those living in rural areas retained a strong belief in what were termed "vague ghostly terrors". [18]

These restless spirits formed a basis for ghost impersonation in the Victorian era. The behaviour of these pretend spirits was based, not on the spectres which appeared in literature, but upon well-established rural traditions. This explains certain key features of the phenomenon of ghost impersonation. By harkening back to traditional notions of wandering spirits, these fake ghosts could exploit established fears of the night as a home to supernatural terrors. Meanwhile, the reaction to these ghosts was almost inexplicable to middle-class commentators, whose views on the supernatural had been informed by literary accounts of apparitions. This can be seen in the discussion of the so-called "modern ghosts" that appeared throughout the 19th century, and framed the prowling spirits of the industrial world as weak imitators of their predecessors. As one journalist observed in 1880: "Ghosts nowadays never seem to appear for a moral purpose as they have done in several well-known instances of old. They never come to tell of a treasure, or if they do, the finders are singularly reticent on the point. They never are

ANATOMY OF A GHOST PANIC: THE DUNDEE GHOST

A useful case study of ghost impersonation is provided by the story of the Dundee Ghost, an apparition which, for a number of months in 1898, haunted the Scottish town. The activities of this spirit were followed in some detail by the local press and from this we can reconstruct the development of a ghost panic.

The earliest reports of the Dundee Ghost date from mid-November, when a number of stories appeared in the press claiming that a ghost impersonator was active in the town. The standard practice of this individual was to dress in a white sheet, and present itself before pedestrians out alone on dark winter evenings. Despite its efforts it managed to inspire little fear in witnesses. In one instance, the ghost appeared several times in the garden of a substantial property. The owner, unhappy with the intrusion, decided to confront the ghost, which was then forced to take to its heels, and only escaped after hiding in an adjacent garden. [1] A few days later the ghost presented itself before a lamplighter who, although frightened, was armed with a stick, and determined not to retreat; faced with the prospect of being beaten, the ghost again fled, though the lamplighter, "considering discretion the better part of valour", chose not to follow.[2] A number of other attempts were made to capture the ghost, which seems to have spent more time fleeing from angry citizens than frightening them.

The ghost, apparently deciding that the people of Dundee were too fearless, relocated further inland, and attempted to terrify people in the vicinity of Coupar Angus. This proved to be no more successful; in one instance, fleeing from angry witnesses, it tripped after becoming entangled in its own costume. [3] The ghost took this as a cue to return to Dundee, and shortly afterwards was sighted on dark streets in the vicinity of Downfield and Baxter Park; so dark, in fact, that it was forced to carry a lamp to find its way around, leading one newspaper to note that, for a ghost, it was a "most up-to-date personage".[4]

While the press generally treated the apparition as a ridiculous figure, it is clear that its presence spread disquiet throughout the town. Many people were unnerved by stories of sprits roaming the fringes of the town; "several women," claimed one account, "were put in a 'state of bodily alarm' by the sudden appearance of the apparition, clad in white." [5] Outraged by its continued activities, a number of the town's inhabitants took to roaming its streets by night, seeking out the ghost, which was progressively forced to the town's fringes in order to escape detection. It was last spotted in what was then the nearby village of Broughty Ferry, attempting to molest the inhabitants there. [6]

The story of the Dundee Ghost had something of a sequel two years later, when reports of a ghost impersonator were attached to the area surrounding the town. It was widely rumoured that the person responsible was the son of a Dundee gentleman who had taken on the guise of a phantom for a wager. A somewhat far-fetched story claimed that a girl had died from shock after spotting this ghost, "face shining with phosphorus". [7] The local people were understandably up in arms, though the ghost would ultimately evade capture.

The tone of the stories told about the Dundee Ghost suggests a complex mix of actual sightings with sensational gossip. Whilst it is likely that an actual ghost impersonator was responsible for some of the stories, they were soon embellished and supplemented by tales circulating in the town. There is, of course, a significant difference between the early tales of pedestrians driving off men dressed in sheets and the later tales of apparitions flitting around Broughty Ferry. The return of the ghost two years later suggests a shift, with the Dundee Ghost becoming a local legend, an elusive impersonator who, dressed as a spirit, was prone to trouble those living in the vicinity of the town.

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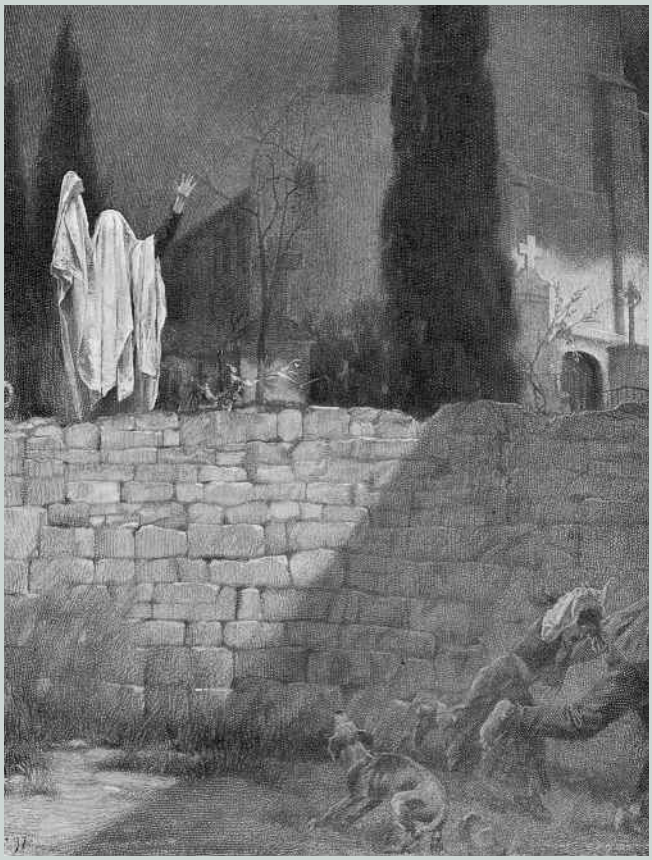


MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

TOP: The High Street of Dundee, photographed circa 1880. **ABOVE:** An illustration from 1898 shows a ghost impersonator wearing the archetypal white sheet.

NOTES

1 "A Dundee Ghost", *The Dundee Courier*, 14 Nov 1898, p4.

2 Ibid, p4.

3 "Cupar", *The Dundee Courier*, 25 Nov 1898, p3.

4 "Ghost in the East End", *The Evening Telegraph* (Edinburgh), 2 Dec 1898, p3.

5 Ibid, p3.

6 "Broughty Ferry", *The Dundee Courier*, 14 Dec 1898, p7.

7 "A Bogus Ghost", *The Manchester Times*, 14 Dec 1900, p3.

disquieted on account of inadequate lodging at present, and troubled until they reveal to some terrified confident where their bones lie, and the need they feel of more decent sepulchre." [19]

Yet the traditional ghosts imagined in this passage are more the product of literature than any supernatural experience. Despite the assumptions of many, the strange, wandering spirits portrayed by ghost impersonators were far closer to the popular conception of the ghost.

Ghosts in a Changing World

The scale of ghost impersonation during the Victorian era was largely a transient phenomenon, produced by a convergence of factors in a changing world. Urbanisation and industrialisation were altering the landscape of Britain, and making ghost impersonation into a viable pastime, while the spread of street lighting and policing was not sufficiently advanced to provide much of a deterrent to anyone who chose to take on the guise of an apparition.

However, the factors that produced the phenomenon would also be ultimately responsible for its decline. While urbanisation created environments for ghost impersonators to roam, it also eroded the rural traditions which had established the images of the ghost upon which the practice relied. Meanwhile, education and literacy were redefining the image of the ghost, and eroding fear of the supernatural. By the 1870s it was commonly thought, in the words of one writer, that ghosts were nothing more than "fancies of a bygone age, as the creations of excited and overheated imaginations". [20]

Belief in the supernatural as a threatening force in everyday life was on the decline. Sightings of apparitions were no longer taken at face value, and the natural assumption on seeing a ghost would be that it was an individual in disguise. Ghost impersonation, then, should be seen as a passing phase, linking the last stages of traditional rural belief systems with the modern urbanised world. This was recognised by many Victorian writers, who observed that attitudes towards the supernatural were changing. As one writer stated, ghosts were "seldom heard of" in "the more populous and politer parts of the land" and they were, for the most part, confined to the more remote rural areas.[21] Others saw the phenomenon specifically in terms of changes in belief. An editorial discussing ghost impersonation in *The Daily Gazette*, published in 1879, stated that: "From time immemorial there have been foolish persons who have affected to play the part of a ghost. In the days of yore, when superstition was supreme, the nocturnal disturbers, who stalked about with solemn stride, were supposed to be supernatural, and affrighted all whom they approached; but in these modern times, when Materialism finds so much favour, ghosts are at a discount. Sometimes one puts in an appearance in a country place and succeeds in terrifying silly women and children; but he has to be very careful in his movements, because every human being does not now recede from him in awe..." [22]

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: By the late 19th century, street lighting and increased policing made ghost impersonation difficult.

The Daily Gazette was, perhaps, somewhat optimistic as to the speed of the decline in belief, and the final decades of the 19th century saw a number of outbreaks of ghost impersonation. Nevertheless, ghost sightings were increasingly out of place in the secular and urban world of modern Britain, and ghost impersonators were equally becoming anachronistic. The sight of a man wrapped in a sheet in the moonlight no longer invoked fear, but contempt. FT

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

JACOB MIDDLETON is an historical researcher who combines academic work in the history of education with a love of sensationalist Victorian media. His current work focuses on educational anxiety in Victorian Britain.

NOTES

1 "The Derby "Ghosts" ", *The Derby Daily Telegraph*, 1 Oct 1885, p3.

2 "Modern Ghosts", *The Graphic*, 3 Oct 1885, p366.

3 "Apprehension of a 'Ghost'", *The Dundee Courier*, 29 Sept 1885, p5.

4 See Owen Davies: *The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2009), pp165-186.

5 "A Derby Ghost", *The Derby Mercury*, 2 Sept 1885, p8.

6 "A Stonehaven "Ghost", *The Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 18 Jan 1899, p8.

7 See, for instance, *The Daily Gazette*, 26 Sept 1879, p2; *The Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet, and General Advertiser*, 8 Oct 1880, p6.

8 "A Ghost with an Umbrella", *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 29 Sept 1895, p5.

9 See "A Derby Ghost", *The Derby Mercury*, 2 Sept 1885, p8.

10 "The Windsor Forest Ghost", *The Manchester Times*, 5 Feb 1859, p5.

11 "Bad Luck for the Ghost", *The Illustrated Police News*, 29 Sept 1894, p3.

12 "A Ghostly Visitant Flogged and Fleeced", *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 7 Feb 1888, p10.

13 "Laying a "Ghost" in Salisbury Park", *The Wrexham Advertiser*, 26 Sept 1874, p5. The description of a 'black man' is not necessarily a reference to ethnicity, as it was a common folkloric formulation applied to supernatural entities. One should nevertheless note how the use of skin colour is used here to designate otherness.

14 "The Briton Ferry Ghost", *The Western Mail*, 20 Mar 1900, p7.

15 Keith Thomas: *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1971), p596.

16 Henry Bourne: *Antiquates Vulgaris; or, the Antiquities of the Common People* (J White, Newcastle, 1725), p37.

17 Henry Snell: *Men, Movements, and Myself* (JM Dent and Sons Ltd., London, 1936), p4.

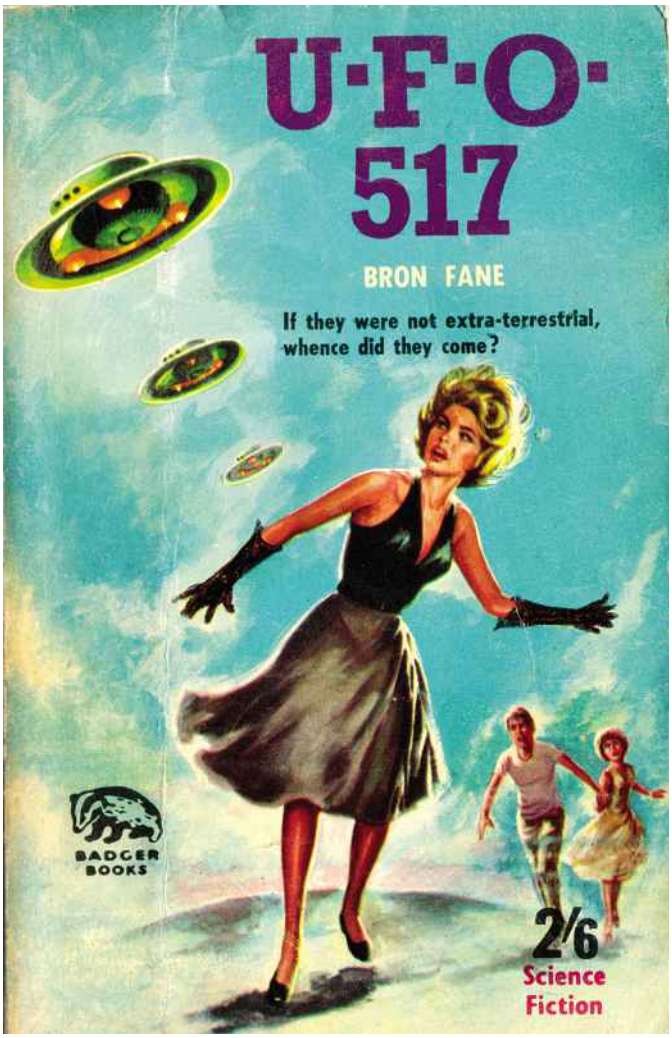
18 See, for instance, Charlotte Sophia Burne: *Shropshire Folk-lore* (Trübner & Co., London, 1883), p114.

19 "Modern Ghosts", *The Graphic*, 6 Mar 1880, p260. See also, "The Garstang Ghost", *The Illustrated Police News*, 17 Sept 1881, p4.

20 John Symons: "Gossip About Ghosts", *The Hull Packet*, 22 Dec 1871, p2.

21 "Indeed the prospects of the country at large, trade and farming in particular, have been so bad that even ghosts share in the general dullness." See "Modern Ghosts", *The Graphic*, 6 Mar 1880, p260.

22 *The Daily Gazette*, 26 Sept 1879, p2.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BRON FANE
If they were not extra-terrestrial, whence did they come?
BADGER BOOKS
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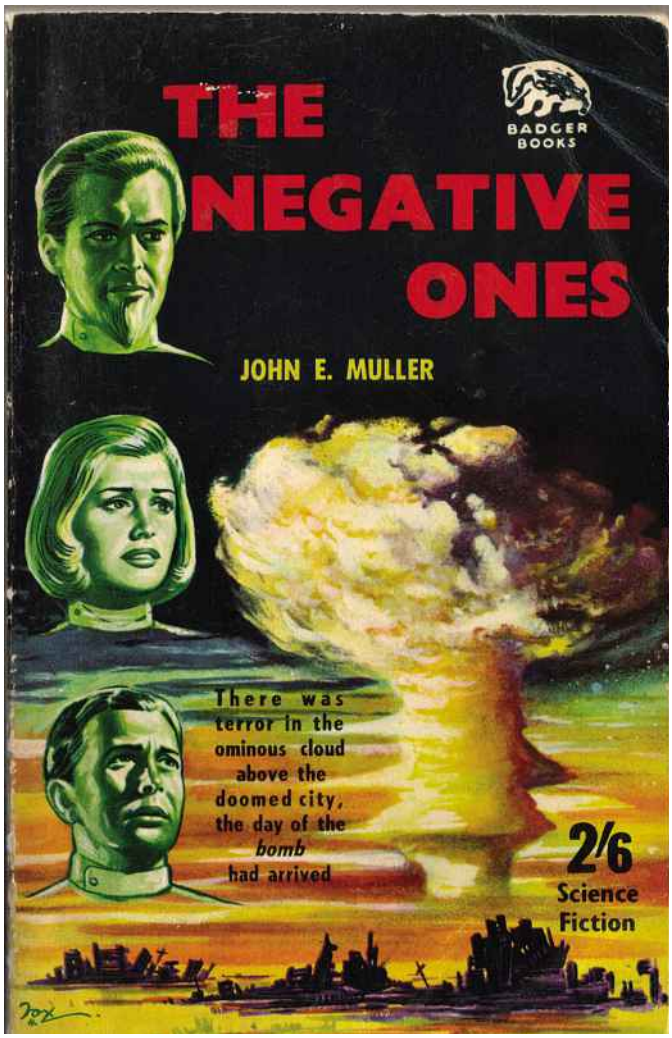
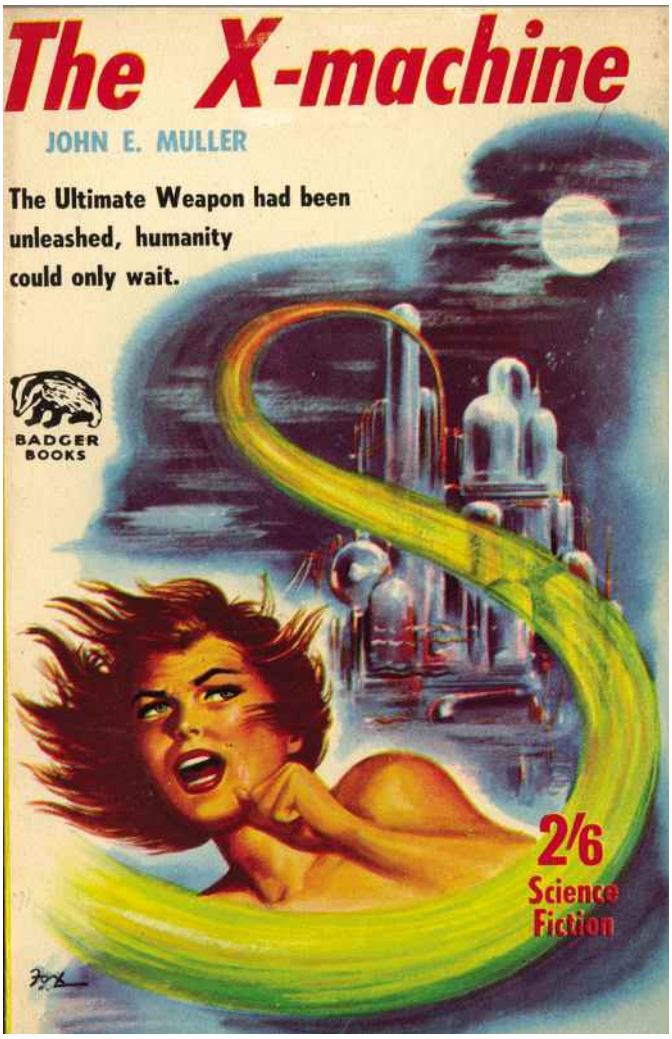
Science Fiction


BADGER BOOKS
THE NEGATIVE ONES
JOHN E. MULLER
There was terror in the ominous cloud above the doomed city, the day of the bomb had arrived
2/6
Science Fiction


The X-machine
JOHN E. MULLER
The Ultimate Weapon had been unleashed, humanity could only wait.
BADGER BOOKS
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Science Fiction

2/6
Science Fiction
They discovered the secret to a mystery older than time itself
SPACE NO BARRIER
PEL TORRO
BADGER BOOKS

FANTHORPE'S FORTEAN FICTION

ANDREW MAY celebrates the literary career of that familiar fortean figure, Lionel Fanthorpe – priest, television show host and (under a variety of colourful pseudonyms) one of the most productive writers in the history of pulp fiction

Big and round, like a great silver full moon it came out of the sky. First as big as a sixpence, then the size of half a crown. Then the size of a saucer; the size of a dinner plate, and still growing as it descended. Huge… vast… and somehow terrifying...

The great disc ship... the unearthly thing, skimming slowly down, like a coin tossed by a careless god, into the abyss of nothingness. A silver coin skimming across a universe; spinning across a galaxy. Down, down... down... a great silver spinning thing. A ship, an alien ship, a strange unearthly thing, something that was cold and hard and terrible. Something that was beyond man... that was different from man… that seemed to have neither part nor parcel with the ordinary human world. Something frightening, frightening because it was strange; strange because it was frightening.
- March of the Robots, by Leo Brett

Lionel Fanthorpe is one of Britain's best-known forteans. He has written numerous non-fiction books about the Knights Templar, Rennes-le-Chateau and other subjects, his appearances at events like the *Fortean Times* UnConvention are guaranteed crowd-pullers, and he even hosted the Channel 4 *Fortean TV* show in the 1990s (see **FT107:34-36**). What is less well known is that, back in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Lionel Fanthorpe was one of the most prolific writers of popular fiction that Britain has ever produced.

Badger Books was a paperback imprint of John Spencer & Co (Publishers) Ltd. Badgers had distinctive yellow spines, and spanned the range of genres that were popular at the time: War, Crime, Westerns, Romance, Supernatural and Science Fiction. Between 1958 and 1965, Lionel Fanthorpe produced at least 170 titles in these last two categories – either under his own name, the house names 'John E Muller' or 'Karl Zeigfreid', or one of numerous pseudonyms he concocted for himself such as Bron Fane, Pel Torro and Leo Brett. That's 170 books in eight years – all written while the twenty-something Fanthorpe was working full-time as a schoolteacher!

LIONEL AND PATRICIA FANTHORPE

BETWEEN 1958 AND 1965, FANTHORPE PRODUCED AT LEAST 170 TITLES

FACING PAGE: A fistful of Badgers; each written by Fanthorpe under a different pseudonym. **ABOVE:** Lionel seen hard at work on another book for John Spencer during the 1950s.

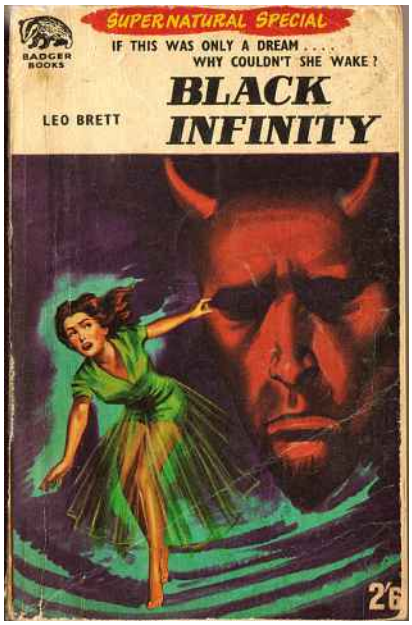
Fanthorpe's productivity – confined to evenings and weekends – exceeded even that of the great American pulp writers of the 1930s and 40s. Lester Dent, working full time, only managed to produce 159 *Doc Savage* novels in 16 years. And there are other differences, too. Dent was able to call on a number of ghostwriters when the going got too tough for him, and his editors did a real editing job. Lionel Fanthorpe never had the luxury of a ghostwriter, or even a proper editor. Badger Books employed a few proofreaders, but they didn't waste their money on editors! As such, the quality of the end product was variable to say the least.

DOWN THE BADGER HOLE

It's a sad fact that Fanthorpe is described by many people – even those who have never seen a Badger Book – as a bad writer. It's a reputation he simply doesn't deserve. Some of his work was bad, but so were some of the *Doc Savage* stories. Yet fans remember Lester Dent for his best work, and they remember Fanthorpe for his worst.

In reality, most of Fanthorpe's output was a lot better than anyone had any right to expect. With no editor to worry about, and a total income of just 15 shillings (75p) per thousand words, Badger authors had very little incentive to turn in good quality work with original plots and interesting characters. And yet, more often than not, that's just what Fanthorpe did. His stories are less formulaic than the *Doc Savage* novels, and just as satisfying for the relatively unsophisticated readership they were aimed at.

Like most authors, Fanthorpe was at his best when he was writing about subjects that interested him. He was interested in ghosts, witches, alchemists, spiritualism, mythology and mad scientists... but he wasn't interested in outer space adventure stories. As a result, his attempts at hard science fiction are pretty poor – and that, ultimately, is why his Badger Books have such a bad reputation today. Science fiction fandom is a dangerous thing for an author to get on the wrong side of.



WHAT CAPTURED HIS INTEREST THE MOST WAS THE SUPERNATURAL

What captured Fanthorpe's imagination the most was when the supernatural – or the alien, or the just plain weird – suddenly interposed itself in the ordinary, present-day world.

This, of course, is the essence of forteana – a subject that Fanthorpe was deeply interested in even in those early days. He employed this kind of scenario not only in his 'supernatural' books but also in many of those that were labelled as 'science fiction' – thus managing to circumvent the limitations of the genre he disliked so much!

Somewhere Out There (SF-92, 1963, by Bron Fane) opens with a time-travelling flying saucer landing in present-day London, while *Space No Barrier* (SF-106, 1964, by Pel Torro) starts with an alien artefact being unearthed at an archæological dig in Iraq. Even more bizarrely, *The Negative Ones* (SF-109, 1965, by John E Muller) has an ancient Indian *vimana*, or flying car, turning up in present-day East Anglia! The subject of *vimanas* had been popularised a decade earlier by Desmond Leslie in his writings on flying saucers, but Fanthorpe comes up with his own imaginative theory to connect the ancient Sanskrit legends to present-day UFO sightings.

Another of Fanthorpe's Badgers that is labelled as science fiction but actually takes place in the present day is *Radar Alert* (SF-83, 1963, by Karl Zeigfreid). This particular book has gained lasting notoriety for the fact that it was produced in just 11 hours, in the space of a single day: 2 November 1963. The book was dictated at high speed into a tape recorder, and the tapes were transcribed onto paper by a pool of typists working in parallel. There is every reason to expect the result to be atrocious, and yet it isn't. The basic idea is attention-grabbing and (for 1963) original: an electronic alien life form that invades Earth by way of an advanced military radar that it uses to 'amplify' itself. The book has an exciting plot, engaging characters and a satisfying ending. People who describe this sort of thing as 'bad' are simply being snobbish – it's just what the readers of a cheap, yellow-spined paperback were looking for in 1963.

Speed wasn't the only challenge facing a Badger author. The normal sequence in novel-writing is for an author to produce the text first, then send it to the publisher who will commission a cover design, write a blurb for the back-cover, and possibly come up with a more commercial title. At Badger Books, the whole process was reversed. The cover image came first, which was sent to the author with a request to provide a title and a sales blurb. It was only at a later point in the cycle that the actual text was written.

A good example of this is *Black Infinity* (SN-44, 1961, as by Leo Brett). Take a look at the cover image (above) and then consider this passage from the book: "The murals on the wall distorted by the smoke seemed somehow to be half alive and, as she watched, while the solemn procession made its way to the hideous black altar, she saw the great devil face actually moving... as though some sinister power from the blackest abyss, as though some dark entity from beyond a black infinity had come and animated that two dimensional image of itself."

When it comes to Fanthorpe's outer space adventures, though, it's generally a case of the less said the better. One notable exception is *Negative Minus* (SF-88, 1963, by RL Fanthorpe), which is essentially a science-fictional retelling of Homer's *Odyssey*... in which most of the names are spelled backwards! The hero is a spaceship captain named Suessydo (Odysseus), who is a native of the planet Acahti (Ithaca). In his

ABOVE AND TOP: With Badger Books, the artwork usually came before a word of the story had been written.

FANTHORPE ON FANTASTIC FICTION

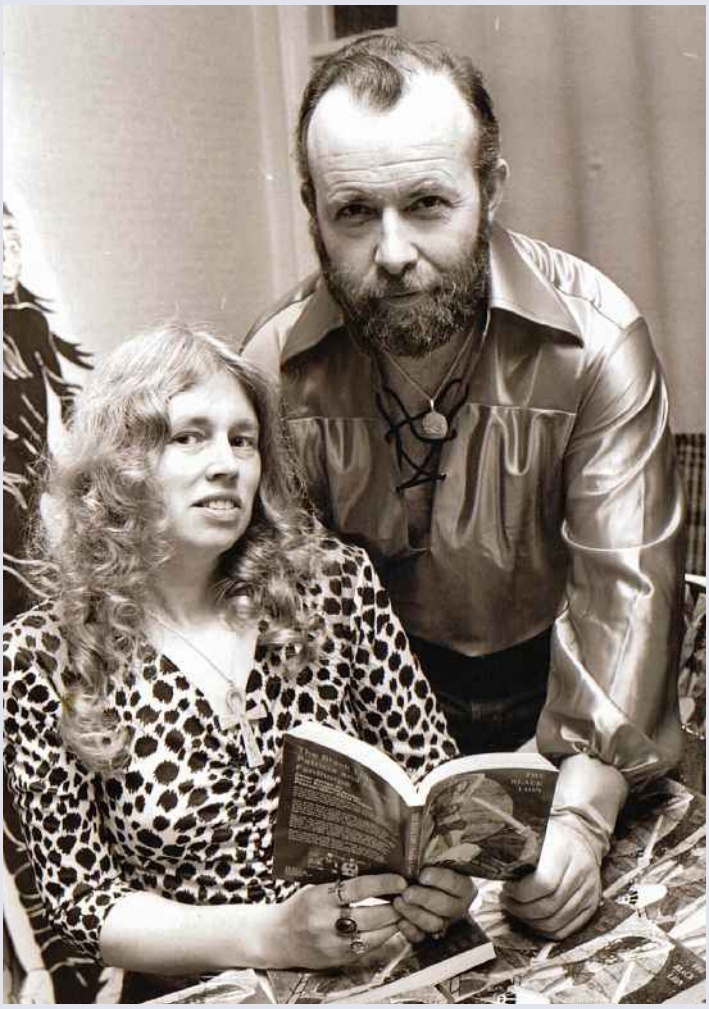
As a teenager, I greatly enjoyed reading HG Wells, Edgar Allan Poe, Brian Aldiss and other SF and fantasy authors whose books were in the school library. Slowly, as I read and enjoyed SF and speculative literature in general, it dawned on me to have a go at writing some. The first thing I submitted to Badger was a poem, a parody of Masefield's "Sea Fever" which we had to learn as part of the literature exam syllabus. It started like this:

I must go back into space again,
To the lonely space – and the stars –
And all I ask is a rocket ship
And a job to do on Mars...

It came back with a letter from Spencer's which said: "Sorry we don't publish poetry. Could you write some short SF stories for us, or a full length 50,000 word SF novel?"

Naturally, I said yes, and the first of my stories they published was called "Worlds Without End". That was 60 years ago in 1952 when I was 17. Maybe, in view of what happened during the next few years, it should have been called "Words Without End".

I still enjoy writing today just as much as I did in 1952. Nowadays, Patricia and I co-write everything, and we love working together after 55 years of wonderfully happy marriage. We mainly do on-site research into factual mysteries, like the Oak Island Money Pit in Nova Scotia and the Barbados Coffins, although we still write fantasy fiction. *The Black Lion* – a sword-and-sorcery adventure, and our own personal favourite – came out in 1980 but will be out again soon as an e-book, and we are currently working hard on the second book of the trilogy. This second adventure is called *The Golden Tiger*, and will also soon be an e-book. We try to keep up with technology!



LIONEL AND PATRICIA FANTHORPE

RIGHT: Lionel and Patricia Fanthorpe launch fantasy novel *The Black Lion* in 1980.

WORLDS WITHOUT END

For this article, Lionel managed to unearth a copy of his first published story. "Worlds Without End" appeared in the magazine *Futuristic Science Stories* in 1952. Its author was just 17, and here went under what would prove to be the first of many pen names: Lionel Roberts. We are proud to present the immortal opening paragraphs of this long-forgotten Fanthorpe classic.

The total of potential brain energy which was gathered round the mighty three-dimensional video screen on Luna, would have wrecked any PE4 type of Alpha Rhythm counter, for the audience consisted entirely of major-grade Karads – those super-scientists of all nationalities and all planets, who held in their hands the destinies of the entire population of the Solar System.

A more motley gathering it would have been difficult to visualise: scaly giants from Jupiter; bird-men from Saturn; elementals from the clouds of cosmic dust between the asteroids; monster ants from Mars and even a couple of Venusian amphibians. All were bound together by closer ties than any family – a lust for knowledge, for power and an insatiable greed for more worlds to control. It was this latter reason that had every eye glued to the video, the giant Tracer of which was focused with uncanny accuracy on to the silver outline of a 1,000 foot Multi-velox Asquith-drive space ship way out near Andromeda.

Ratol motioned to a waiting android who hurried forward with an assorted bundle of communal telepath units, which it distributed to the waiting Karads. While some of the physically clumsy members were being assisted on with their units by deft-fingered androids, Ratol began a last-minute résumé of the screen project...

adventures, he encounters a giant one-eyed alien called Sumehpylop (Polyphemus), a narcotic fruit called Sutol (Lotus), and an ethereal entity called Suloea (Aeolus). A female alien named Ecric (Circe) causes several crewmembers to metamorphose into pig-like quadrupeds, and later transports Suessydo to a strange parallel dimension called Suratrat (Tartarus).

A FORTEAN POLYMATH

Lionel Fanthorpe has always been something of a fortean polymath, and he put his broad knowledge of arcane subjects to good use in his novels. *Unknown Destiny* (SN-84, 1964, by Bron Fane) is a tale about a group of archæologists and a mysterious force they unwittingly unleash on the world; but in the course of 150 pages it manages to digress onto the topics of Paul Kammerer and the midwife toad hoax, JB Rhine and his experiments with ESP, the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam and the *Necronomicon* of Abdul Alhazred. A cynic might describe all this gratuitous erudition as 'padding' – but it's padding like that of no other hack writer before or since!

In other novels, the fortean element is central to the plot. *Vengeance of Siva* (SN-60, 1962, by John E Muller) is a mystical thriller which sees the hero caught up in a vast conflict between Hindu gods and goddesses. *Time Echo* (SF-23, 1959, by Lionel Roberts) deals with one of Charles Fort's own cases: the mysterious disappearance of Benjamin Bathurst, the British diplomat who 'walked around the horses' in 1809 and was never seen again. In Fanthorpe's novel, Bathurst is transported five centuries into the future through a time vortex!

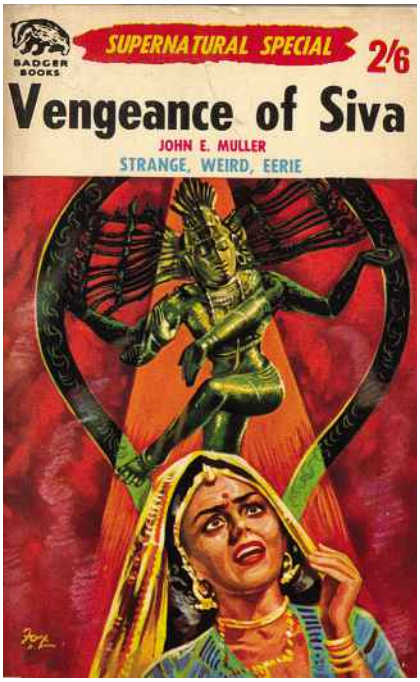
Fort is even mentioned by name in some of the Badger novels. When the heroine of *The X-Machine* (SF-74, 1962, by John E Muller) comes across three peculiar newspaper clippings, we are told that: "In isolation the three stories did not really seem to be much more than journalistic oddities, but to an intelligent woman like Sally McQuire, who had read the books of Charles Hoy Fort, there was a certain power about such incidents when they were taken not in random isolation, but when they were added together."

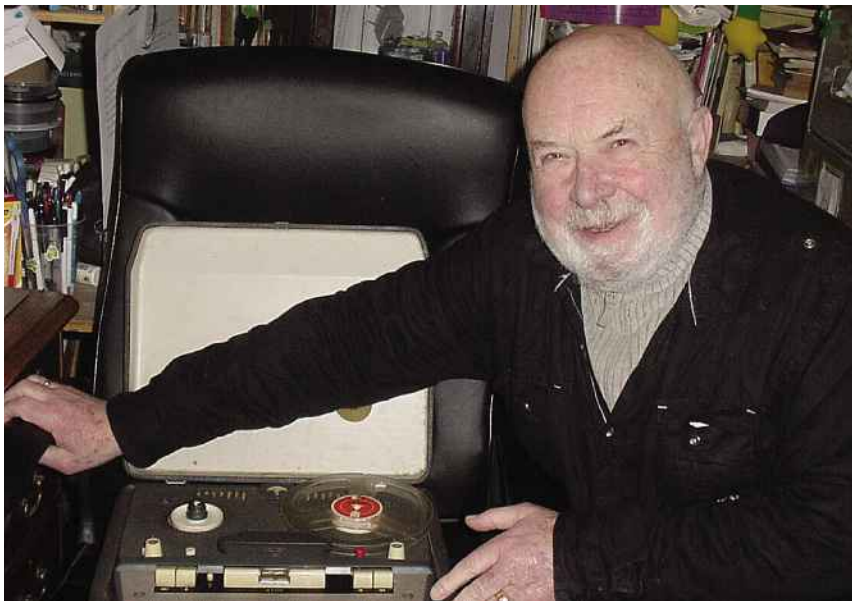
One of the most explicitly fortean of Fanthorpe's novels is *UFO 517* (SF-115, 1965, by Bron Fane). This again makes explicit reference to Charles Fort, and provides imaginative explanations not only of UFOs, as might be expected from the book's title, but (with the aid of a bit more time-travelling) two of the most intriguing fortean phenomena of the 19th century: the creeping coffins of Chase Vault in Barbados and the 'Devil's footprints' that mysteriously appeared in the Exe Valley in February 1855.

Although Lionel Fanthorpe will be best known to *FT* readers for his fortean work, he is also a prolific writer of religious books and a fully ordained Anglican priest. It's probably no coincidence that the hero of many of his supernatural thrillers is a priest, tough both physically and spiritually, who uses his fists and his flask of holy water to fight all manner of demons, werewolves, vampires and Satanists. The name of the priest character varies from book to book, but they all share the same Fanthorpian physique and values.

It's safe to assume these characters are at least partly autobiographical, and the description of Father Donaldson from *The Forbidden* (SN-72, 1963, by Leo Brett) gives a glimpse into what lies behind Fanthorpe's astonishing productivity and versatility:

"He could pour all the attention of his mighty mind to one job to the exclusion of everything else. When the task was completed... he would guide that mighty mental power into some other channel, and give that the same undivided attention as he had given to the former task." FT





LIONEL AND PATRICIA FANTHORPE

TOP: Some of Lionel's work, particularly in Badger's supernatural series, invoked explicitly fortean elements.
RIGHT: Lionel today, with the old tape recorder into which he dictated his Badger books.

FURTHER READING

Steve Holland, *Badger Tracks, Underworld Studios (no date)*

Debbie Cross, *Down the Badger Hole: R Lionel Fanthorpe – the Badger Years*, Wrigley Cross, 1995.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

ANDREW MAY is a former scientist living in the south-west of England. He has a lifelong interest in forteana, pulp fiction, metaphysics and anything weird or mysterious. He is a freelance writer and regular contributor to FT and blogs at http://forteana-blog.blogspot.co.uk/

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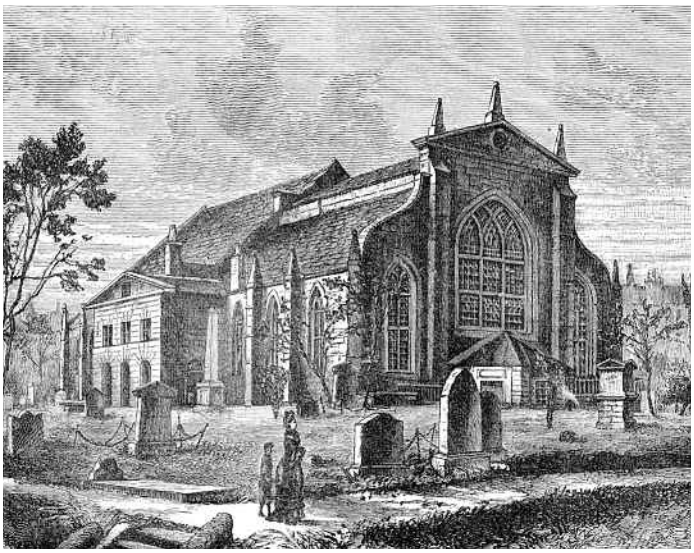
GREYFRIARS BOBBY

Any visitor to Edinburgh will encounter a monument to Scotland's most famous canine, Greyfriars Bobby. This little terrier, the most faithful dog in the world, is said to have kept a vigil at his master's grave for 14 long years. Many children's books, and three successful films, have been inspired by the story. But how much of it is actually true, and how much is make-believe? **JAN BONDESON** investigates...



FACING PAGE: The monument to Greyfriars Bobby erected by Baroness Burdett-Coutts **LEFT:** Greyfriars Kirk and burial grounds.

The traditional story of Greyfriars Bobby is that some time in 1858, an old man named Gray was buried at the Greyfriars burial grounds in Edinburgh. John Traill, who kept an eating-house nearby, later claimed that the old Midlothian farmer John Gray had been a regular guest of his, along with his little terrier Bobby. After 'Auld Jock' had been buried, the dog remained at the cemetery, keeping vigil at his master's grave. James Brown, the curator of the burial ground, tried to shoo the dog away, but Bobby always returned to the grave, resting underneath one of the great table-stones nearby. With time, Brown grew attached to Bobby, providing the little dog with food and shelter in the cemetery grounds. In cold and wet weather, efforts were made to keep Bobby indoors, but the dismal howls of the devoted dog made it clear that he wanted to return to Auld Jock's grave, whatever the weather conditions.

In time, Greyfriars Bobby won many friends. Every day, when Bobby heard the one o'clock gun fired at Edinburgh Castle, he made his way to the local restaurant, where kind Mr Traill made sure he received food and water. In addition, Colour Sergeant Donald McNab Scott, of the Royal Engineers, allowed the little dog a weekly treat of steaks. Bobby was a vigorous hunter of rats, endearing himself to James Brown by keeping these pests at bay both in the church and the burial grounds. Bobby also chased cats with alacrity, and was fond of picking fights with other male dogs, irrespective of their size. James Anderson, an upholsterer living in Candlemaker Row nearby, was surprised to see the angry little dog chase all the cemetery cats away. He knew that it was part of James Brown's work to keep dogs and children out of the burial grounds, but when challenged, the old curator told him that Bobby was an exception to this rule, since the little terrier did such sterling work keeping the vermin at bay. James Anderson also joined Bobby's friends, feeding him bones and scraps, and

SOME TIME IN 1858, AN OLD MAN NAMED GRAY WAS BURIED IN THE GREYFRIARS BURIAL GROUNDS IN EDINBURGH

ETIENNE GILFILLAN

offering him a warm bed in front of the fire on stormy nights. Anderson's neighbour, the tailor Robert Ritchie, also provided for the little dog from time to time. Already in 1864, Greyfriars Bobby was something of a local celebrity; people liked to see the dapper little dog trotting along to Mr Traill's restaurant after the sound of the one o'clock gun.

But Greyfriars Bobby also had some enemies. In 1867, John Traill was summoned to the Burgh Court for keeping an unlicensed dog. It was well known that for at least five years, Bobby had paid a daily visit to his restaurant at 6 Greyfriars Place, just outside the burial ground. Some mean-spirited person had noticed that Traill was not paying any dog-tax, and proceedings were duly taken against the restaurateur. In court, Traill argued that Greyfriars Bobby had no owner, since the dog refused to attach himself to any one. Thus it was unfair to burden Traill with the tax of a dog that did not acknowledge him as its owner. The Burgh Court saw sense, and the summons was dismissed. But the question remained: who should be responsible for Greyfriars Bobby's dog tax? James Brown offered to pay the money, but two of Bobby's other friends preceded him. Worried that the faithful little dog would be destroyed, James Anderson and Robert Ritchie called at the City Chambers, having clubbed together to

HE WAS GIVEN A COLLAR WITH THE INSCRIPTION 'GREYFRIARS BOBBY, FROM THE LORD PROVOST 1867'

ABOVE: An engraving of Gourlay Steell's painting of Greyfriars Bobby, by Harrison Weir, from *Animal World*, May 1870. **LEFT:** William Chambers, the Lord Provost of Edinburgh, in his robes, from the James Grant's *Old and New Edinburgh*. **FACING PAGE:** Greyfriars Bobby's fairy godmother, the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, from *Animal World*, February 1907.

pay the tax. But it turned out that the Lord Provost himself, the publisher Sir William Chambers, had read about Greyfriars Bobby in the newspapers. This gentleman, the director of the Scottish SPCA, and a firm lover of dogs, ordered City Officer McPherson to show Greyfriars Bobby to him and his wife. When they met, Sir William was so delighted with the vigorous little Bobby that he offered to pay his dog tax, for life. Bobby was duly given a collar with a brass plate, bearing the inscription 'Greyfriars Bobby, from the Lord Provost 1867. Licensed.'

A CANINE CELEBRITY

The debate about Greyfriars Bobby's dog tax, and the happy outcome thanks to the intervention of the Lord Provost, was reported in almost every British newspaper, and in quite a few Australian and American ones as well. There was widespread curiosity about this amazing dog and his nine-year vigil at his master's grave. Business picked up markedly for Mr Traill's eating-house, which was never short of customers who

came to see Bobby have his dinner just after the stroke of one. Greyfriars Bobby was also visited by journalists eager for copy. When some reporters from the *Aberdeen Journal* came to Greyfriars to see Bobby, they instead met James Brown, who told them that Bobby was busy ratting in the church. Indeed, this proved to be the case: the angry little dog stood snarling at a rat-hole.

After he had become famous, Greyfriars Bobby was many times visited by artists keen to paint his likeness. The official photograph of Edinburgh's most famous dog was taken on 13 April 1867 by WG Patterson of 34 Frederick Street. Gourlay Steell, known as the Scottish Landseer for his particular talent in painting dogs, invited Bobby to sit for his portrait. But as Steell was painting away, the one o'clock gun sounded and the little dog became quite excited. Bobby could only be pacified when supplied with a hearty meal. The little dog's likeness was also painted by the artists Robert Sanderson, John Macleod and Robert Walker Macbeth. In fact, there were more portraits and drawings of Bobby than of some of the celebrated beauties of the time. No self-respecting illustrated magazine in Scotland or England could do without a drawing of Greyfriars Bobby, from life.

Greyfriars Bobby lived on for several more years, to enjoy his fame and security. He received letters from all over Britain, and parcels of bones, sausages, and other treats; a wealthy lady, fearful that he would freeze to death, offered to send him a comfortable kennel. Already during his lifetime, Bobby was several times featured in the RSPCA's journal *Animal World*; no animal welfare lecture was complete without a lantern slide depicting this canine paragon of virtue. In 1869, he was visited by the wealthy and dog-loving philanthropist Angela Burdett-Coutts. She was informed that the dog had once belonged to a humble old man named Robert Gray, who had once served his country as a soldier. Since Miss Burdett-Coutts saw that Gray's grave was unmarked, she offered to supply a gravestone, but the Town Council turned her down, with scorn, after a certain Baillie Miller had convinced them that "the whole story of 'Bobby' is a downright fabrication."

In his old age, Greyfriars Bobby continued to patronise Mr Traill's restaurant, but he also paid visits to some other public houses nearby. His loyal old friends James Anderson and Robert Ritchie also looked after him. In 1871, he was permanently adopted by John Traill and his family. They took good care of Bobby, keeping him warm and well fed. When Bobby fell ill with cancer of the jaw, he was nursed by Traill's young daughter Elizabeth. On 14 January, 1872, Bobby fell asleep in front of the fire, never to awake again. Bobby's obituary in the *Scotsman* newspaper praised Traill for his kind attentions to the old dog.

MONUMENTS AND MOVIES

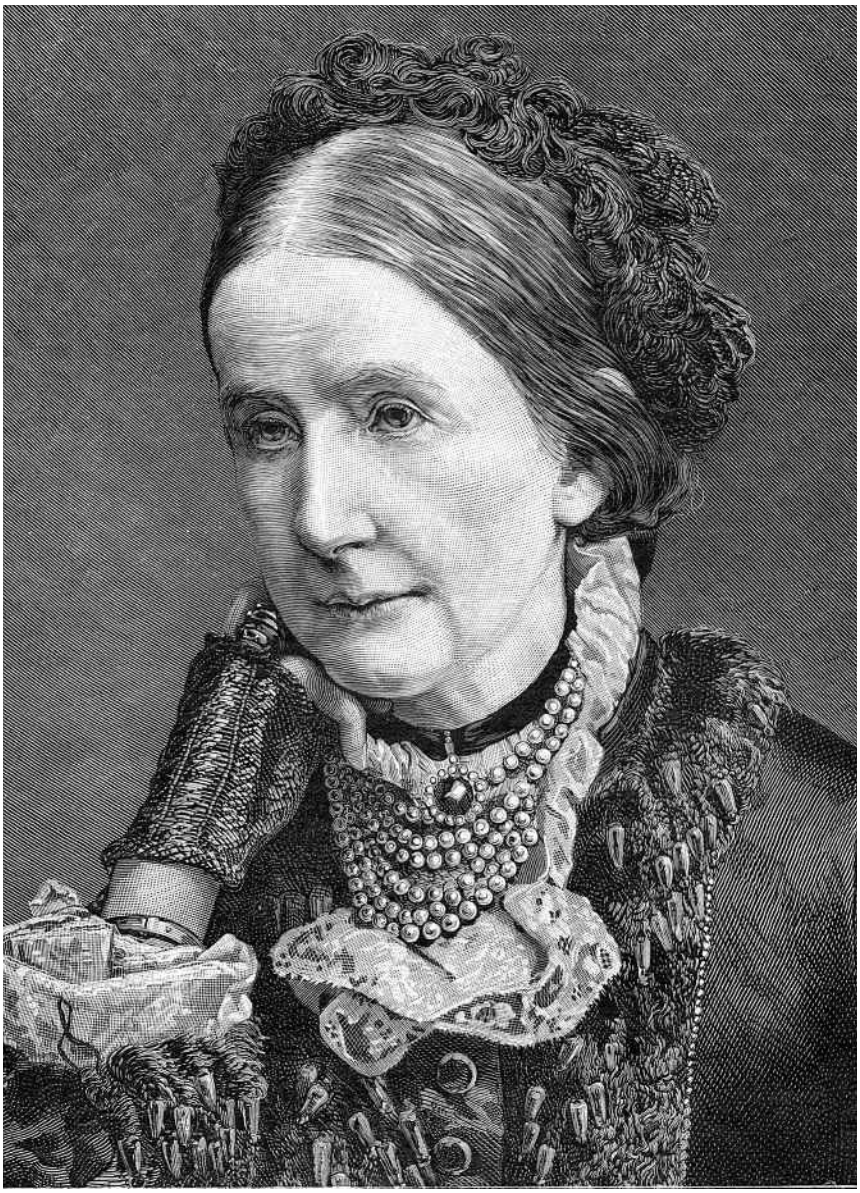
Already, during Greyfriars Bobby's lifetime, there had been discussion about whether there ought to be a monument to Edinburgh's most famous dog. Baroness Burdett-Coutts, as she had become for her many good deeds, had offered to erect a memorial drinking fountain to keep Bobby's memory alive. This time, the town council gratefully accepted her offer, and the fountain was duly erected at the top of Candlemaker Row, providing drinking water for the public, as well as a trough at the bottom for thirsty dogs. On top of the fountain was placed a life-size bronze statue of Bobby by the sculptor William Brodie. The fountain has the inscription:

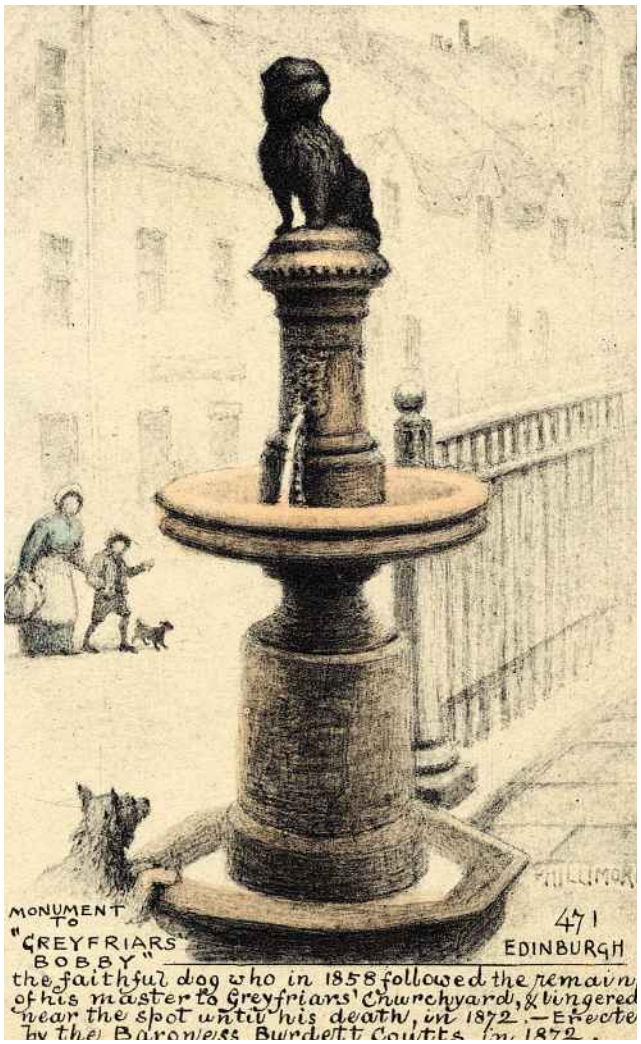
"A tribute to the affectionate fidelity of Greyfriars Bobby. In 1858 this faithful dog followed the remains of his master to Greyfriars Churchyard and lingered near the spot until his death in 1872. With permission, erected by Baroness Burdett-Coutts."

Greyfriars Bobby's statue is today one of the landmarks of Edinburgh. Busload after busload of tourists from all over the world photograph it, particularly the Americans and the Japanese. Some are so overcome with emotion when they hear Bobby's pathetic story that they cry aloud.

Already in 1902, there was a short biography of Greyfriars Bobby by local author Henry Hutton. In 1912, the American author Eleanor Atkinson wrote a novel about his adventures. Although she states that the story is absolutely true, her *Greyfriars Bobby* is largely pure fiction. Her story of the rustic Auld Jock's antecedents at a farm called Cauldbraes is entirely fictitious, and she has the one o'clock gun banging away in 1858, when it did in fact not fire until June 1861. The novel is in part written in ludicrous pseudo-Scots dialogue which is unlikely to have appealed to Bobby's friends back in Edinburgh.

But although the fastidious Scots may have frowned on Eleanor Atkinson's excesses, her version of the affecting story of Greyfriars Bobby became a bestseller; it is still in print today, as the sole claim to fame for this obscure literary lady. Although there have been at least six modern children's books about Greyfriars Bobby, offering cute drawings and saccharine narratives, the Atkinson book still rules the roost. In 1948, during the height of the 'Lassie' craze, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer bought the rights to the Atkinson story, although they substituted Lassie for the humble little Scottish terrier.




MONUMENT TO "GREYFRIARS BOBBY"
the faithful dog who in 1858 followed the remains of his master to Greyfriars' Churchyard, & lingered near the spot until his death, in 1872.—Erected by the Baroness Burdett Coutts in 1872.
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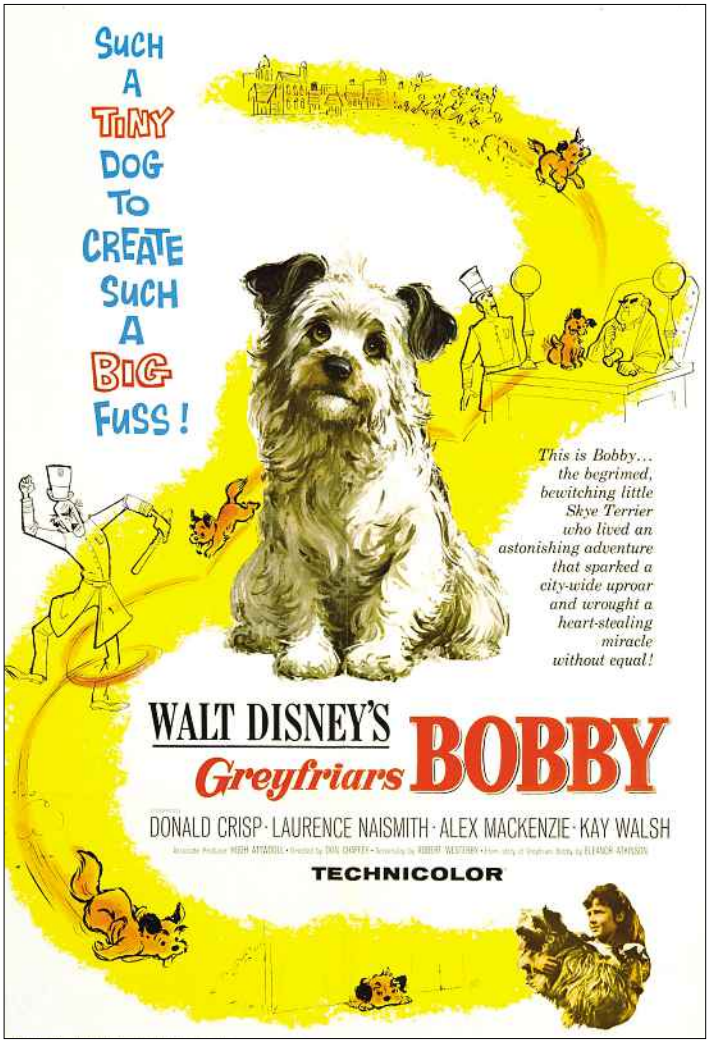
EDINBURGH


SUCH A TINY DOG TO CREATE SUCH A BIG FUSS!
This is Bobby... the begrimed, bewitching little Skye Terrier who lived an astonishing adventure that sparked a city-wide uproar and wrought a heart-stealing miracle without equal!
WALT DISNEY'S
Greyfriars BOBBY
DONALD CRISP · LAURENCE NAISMITH · ALEX MACKENZIE · KAY WALSH
TECHNICOLOR

ABOVE LEFT: A picture postcard of the Greyfriars Bobby monument, by the artist Reginald Phillimore. **ABOVE RIGHT:** A poster for the Walt Disney film of 1961, one of three filmed versions of the Bobby story, all deriving from the sentimental novel of 1912 (complete with cod Scotch dialogue) by American author Eleanor Atkinson.

In 1961, the Atkinson book was adapted into the film *Greyfriars Bobby: The True Story of a Dog* by Walt Disney Productions. Disney visited Edinburgh in person, giving directions for some scenes to be shot on location. In Disney's tear-jerker, every last bit of sentimentality is wrung out of Auld Jock's death, Bobby's vigil on the grave, and his friendship with the local children. There are further touching scenes when the children of Edinburgh contribute their pennies for Bobby's dog license, and the jovial Lord Provost declares the dog a Freeman of the City.

THE REAL BOBBY

So, what do we really know about Greyfriars Bobby? What are the hard facts remaining after nearly 140 years of canine hagiography have turned the humble little Edinburgh terrier into a Hollywood megastar?

The earliest mention of a dog living in the Greyfriars burial grounds is from May 1864, namely an article in the *Inverness Advertiser* stating that a little terrier named Bob had been staying there for some time, becoming quite well known locally. It was presumed that he had come from the country with a funeral cortege, but nobody knew who he was mourning or where he had come from. Then, as we know, there was massive publicity

THE SENTIMENTAL STORY ABOUT THE FAITHFUL DOG WAS SPREAD ALL OVER THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD

about Greyfriars Bobby in April and May 1867: the sentimental story about the faithful dog evading the dog-tax gatherers was spread all over the English-speaking world. These articles mention nothing about a country funeral cortege, instead stating that Bobby had belonged to a poor man named Gray, who had lived in a quiet way in some obscure part of Edinburgh, before expiring eight and a half years earlier. James Brown remembered the funeral, he said, and also the dog being one of the most conspicuous of the mourners. Thirdly, there is an account of John Traill telling an 1871 visitor to his restaurant that Bobby's master had been a Midlothian farmer named Gray, who had expired in 1858. Fourthly, we have the old soldier Robert Gray, referred to as Bobby's master by Baroness Burdett-Coutts's informant.

If there is solid evidence that Bobby really existed, and that he stayed at Greyfriars for some considerable time, the four different versions about his master all appear very suspect. Edinburgh historian Forbes MacGregor found out that John Traill's story about the old farmer having had luncheon in his restaurant with his little dog back in 1858 was pure invention; Traill had no connection whatsoever with the restaurant in Greyfriars Place until May 1862. Nor had a Midlothian farmer, or an out-of-towner of any description, any business being buried in the Greyfriars burial grounds, since they were reserved for local inhabitants. There was no Cauldbraes farm, nor did any John Gray residing in Midlothian or Edinburghshire die between 1858 and 1860. Several historians have searched the Greyfriars burial records for a more promising candidate for Bobby's master than the fictional 'Auld Jock'. It turned out that there were two men named John Gray buried at Greyfriars kirkyard in 1858: a 45-year-old local policeman and the young son of a merchant.

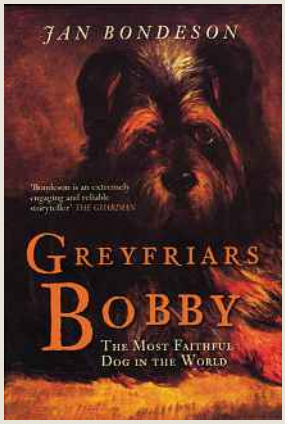
Forbes MacGregor considered John Gray the policeman a worthy candidate, and managed to find some useful information about his career. Gray had once been a

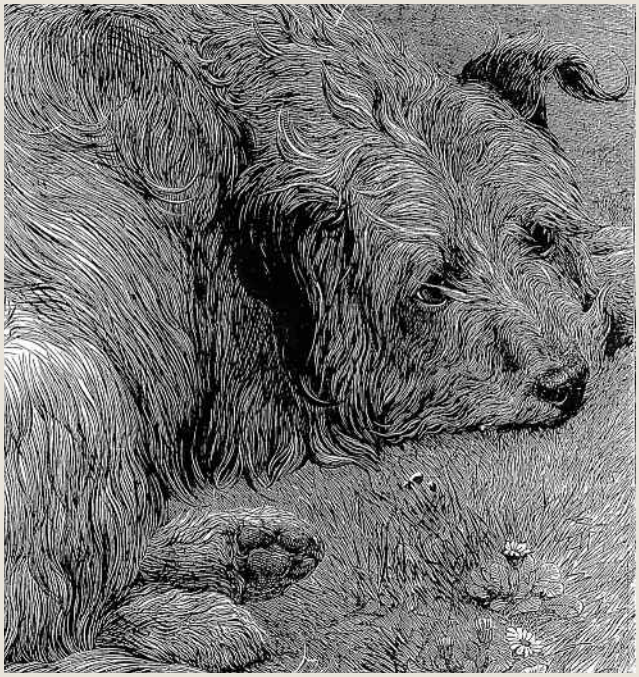
DOGGY ICONOGRAPHY: THE BOBBY PORTRAITS

ABOVE LEFT: Robert Sanderson's 1867 portrait. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The 'official photograph' taken by WG Patterson in 1867. **BELOW LEFT:** A 1918 etching of Bobby, from an 1868 painting from life by Robert Walker Macbeth. **BELOW CENTRE:** The 1867 painting of Greyfriars Bobby by John MacLeod. **BELOW RIGHT:** Greyfriars Bobby lying on his master's grave, a drawing by Friedrich Wilhelm Keyl from *Chatterbox* magazine, 22 June 1867.

One vital task in getting to the bottom of the story is to analyse Greyfriars Bobby's iconography. The first observation must be that the two existing oil portraits of Bobby, painted by Robert Sanderson and John MacLeod in 1867, clearly depict the same dog: a dapper-looking little animal looking like a Skye terrier, black with brown paws, and grizzled grey on his back. Two drawings of Bobby from life, by Friedrich Wilhelm Keyl and by an unknown artist, agree quite well with the oil paintings of him, as does William Brodie's sculpture of Bobby on his monument.

In contrast, the dog in WG Patterson's original 1867 photograph looks like an elderly terrier mongrel. It is likely to have an established cataract in at least one eye, since the pupils look greyish and clouded, one more so than the other. The fur appears to be grey or dark yellow, and the fur on the nose and paws is not lighter in colour than that on the dog's chest. The dog's face looks quite odd, with the eyes wide apart. The right nostril is considerably enlarged, and the right side of the face wider than the left. This is a phenomenon known as facial asymmetry, a relatively uncommon congenital deformity in dogs, perfectly harmless, and probably caused by a partial split palate. The etching of Macbeth's portrait of Greyfriars Bobby clearly depicts the same dog as the Patterson photograph, in a slightly different pose: all the facial peculiarities are there to be seen. In spite of their undoubted artistic merits, Gourlay Steel's paintings of Greyfriars Bobby are a less valuable source, due to the dog's recumbent position, but the enlarged right nostril can still be observed.





country gardener, but after losing his job migrated to Edinburgh in 1853. He managed to get a badly paid job as a police constable and lived in a hovel called Hall Court, situated in Cowgate not far from Greyfriars, with his wife and son. Importantly, MacGregor was able to elucidate that John Gray was actually the local policeman: his beat included Greyfriars itself. In 1857, John Gray fell dangerously ill with tuberculosis; he died at Hall Court in early 1858, and was buried at Greyfriars churchyard on 10 February 1858.

If we make two quite hazardous presumptions, namely that the name 'John Gray' is really that of Bobby's master, and that the vague reports that Bobby came to Greyfriars in 1858 are true, then Forbes MacGregor is probably right: Gray the policeman is the only likely candidate for Bobby's master. But there are also strong arguments against this individual ever having anything to do with the dog. Firstly, the local policeman was a very well known character in those days. Would it really be possible that the locals would entirely forget about his identity just a few months after his death, when the dog appeared in the cemetery? MacGregor also hypothesised that Bobby had been John Gray's watchdog – but would any sane person really employ a tiny Skye terrier as a police dog? If Constable Gray had got into a brawl with some sturdy fellows, it would have been enough for one of the combatants to step on Bobby by accident for the 'watchdog' to be put permanently out of action. And would not the locals remember such a singular police dog patrolling the local beat for several years, before turning up on the grave of his master?

One myth regarding Greyfriars Bobby was exploded by Forbes Macgregor: the dog did not keep vigil on the grave, but went around Greyfriars as it pleased him, ratting inside the church and visiting his various human friends. Bobby regarded the kirkyard as his territory, where he hunted rats, chased cats, and drove mischievous schoolboys away. Already at the time of the Burgh Court hearing in 1867, Bobby was a habitué at the Hole in the Wa' tavern near Society, Bristo, and he was also fed at the small public house at the top of Candlemaker Row, just outside the cemetery. Two years later, a certain Mrs Denholm fed him when he came to visit the local butcher's shop, and Greyfriars neighbour Mrs Watson could well remember Bobby visiting her husband at his Bristo workshop. In spite of his independent nature, Bobby must have been an attractive, friendly dog who made many friends. Since Robert Ritchie, James Anderson, Mr Watson and Mr Traill all took care of him, and allowed him to sleep indoors if he wanted to, the image of poor Greyfriars Bobby shivering on the grave in sleet and snow are likely to be equally fictitious: Bobby probably spent the majority of nights indoors.

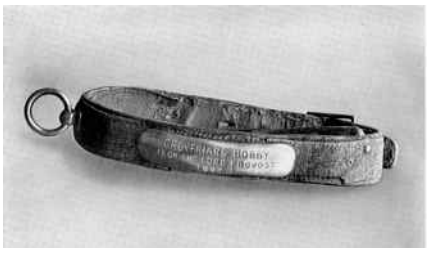
HE REGARDED THE KIRKYARD AS HIS TERRITORY, WHERE HE HUNTED RATS AND CHASED CATS AND SCHOOLBOYS

EDINBURGH
Greyfriars Bobby, the famous Skye Terrier, painted from life by John McLeod in 1867
GREYFRIARS
Greyfriars Bobby

TWO DOGS FOR THE PRICE OF ONE?

It is impossible that the terrier mongrel photographed by Patterson and painted by Macbeth and Steell is the same animal as the Skye terrier painted by Sanderson and McLeod, drawn by Keyl and another, and sculpted by Brodie (see "Doggy Iconography" panel). So, was Greyfriars Bobby more than one dog? Did Bobby I, the dark yellow terrier mongrel, described as elderly in 1864, die in May 1867, to be replaced by Bobby II, the Skye terrier, who then lived on until 1872? This iconoclastic version of events would also explain Bobby's startling longevity. Since he was presumed to be an adult dog in 1858, this would imply that he lived to be 16 or even 18 years old. A modern monograph on the breed claims that 10-12 years is a good lifespan for a Skye terrier. In Greyfriars Bobby's time, the average lifespan for any dog would of course have been considerably shorter than for present-day representatives of the breed, due to the rudimentary veterinary attention available. It makes more sense for Bobby I to take up his position in the cemetery in 1860 as an adult dog, and then expire in 1867 aged between nine and 13. His successor Bobby II, recruited in 1867 as an adult dog, remained at Greyfriars for nearly five years. As we know, this angry little dog was noted for his propensity to fight other dogs, even if they were much larger than him, a most unseeming belligerence in a dog presumed to be 17 years old, but perfectly natural in one aged around eight. Bobby II lived until January 1872, expiring from cancer of the jaw at the age of between seven and nine.

The hypothesis that Greyfriars Bobby was in fact two dogs also solves some of the other conundrums surrounding this mysterious canine. Firstly, the original newspaper descriptions of the elderly Bobby fit the dog in the Patterson photograph quite well. Secondly, the two Bobbys would explain some very enigmatic statements from the anti-Bobby author Thomas Wilson Reid: namely that Bobby died soon after being lionised in April 1867. After its investiture with the grand



LEFT: Mug, spoon, thimble, bell and pewter statue: the range of Greyfriars Bobby memorabilia is endless. **ABOVE:** Greyfriars Bobby's collar.

JOHN AND KIT LOVIE

LEFT: An Edinburgh parade on World Animals Day 2009, led by Greyfriars Bobby lookalike 'Bombardier Blue', the official canine mascot of the One o'Clock Gun and Time Ball Foundation.

golden chain from the Lord Provost, the ugly old mongrel "died of pure shame of itself", only to be transformed into the similitude of a pure Skye terrier. Several early authors remarked on Bobby's ugly appearance, whereas later writers described him as a fine Skye terrier, adding that the statue on the Candlemaker Row dog monument was an excellent likeness.

The obvious instigators of a substitution of dogs would of course be James Brown and/or John Traill. Brown earned considerable sums from the tips and the sale of his cabinet cards depicting Greyfriars Bobby. Traill found Bobby very useful to advertise his restaurant, and to attract customers who wanted to see the famous dog. Had the elderly Greyfriars Bobby expired in May 1867, these two would have been in a quandary. A dead Bobby would have been no good for them, but a living one would do the trick for many years to come. If the neighbour, Mrs Watson, had known about the substitution of dogs, it would explain her indignation at James Brown making money from exploiting Bobby. As originally expressed by an 1889 journalist: "After the story got current, Brown was very solicitous about Bobby, and on account of the crowds who came to see him, it was not in the interest of several others in the neighbourhood, to minimize the circumstance."

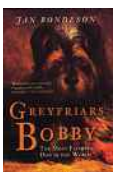
THE ANTI-BOBBY LOBBY

Already during Greyfriars Bobby's lifetime, some sceptics suggested that he was not what people supposed him to be. The truth, an 1871 newspaper writer asserted, was that in the early 1860s a dog had strayed into Greyfriars churchyard, where the sexton and gravediggers had taken care of him. Being well fed and looked after, the dog had been encouraged to take up permanent residence at Greyfriars, making himself useful by decimating the local rat and cat populations. During daytime, he trotted about at will in the burial grounds; at night, he slept underneath one of the old table-stones. The Edinburgh correspondent of a north-country newspaper thought it odd that a dog should live in the burial grounds. As a joke, he invented a story of the faithful dog keeping vigil on his owner's grave. What he had not calculated on was that the hoax would later find its way back to Edinburgh, where it caused quite a sensation. Although he was just an unconscious impostor, Greyfriars Bobby became a local hero. Now it was time to call an end to this embarrassing joke, the journalist demanded: "The sympathies of the Baroness Burdett-Coutts have been evoked to perpetuate an idle tale and bequeath a fountain, to extol faithfulness that never existed, and history whose entire foundation is fictitious."

When challenged by anti-Bobby writers, the Greyfriars sexton Mr Thomson denied that there was any truth in the story of Bobby's long vigil: "It was a black lee [lie], frae end to end!" The Ayr journalist Thomas Wilson Reid claimed to have been involved in creating the hoax after seeing the Greyfriars cemetery dog in 1864, and persuading a colleague to make up the story about his faithful mourning for the *Inverness Advertiser*. In a novel he wrote in 1882, he openly boasted that he was the spiritual father of the Greyfriars Bobby legend. The English were wrong to claim that the Scotsman was a hard-headed, incredulous being, Reid exclaimed: here we have a yarn of canine fidelity that entirely lacked substance, being magnified into a city monument and a famous story to be told to generations yet unborn!

In February 1889, there had been a subscription to erect a marble monument to Bobby in the Greyfriars churchyard. But when the matter was debated at the Town Council, councillor JB Gillies objected that the Greyfriars Bobby story was just a penny-a-liner's romance. There was no truth to the story, the dog had never had any 'beloved master', and one monument to this canine impostor was more than enough. Greyfriars Bobby had been a very respectable dog, but he was just a stray mongrel of the High Street breed [laughter], who had just enough sense to take cover against the elements under one of the great table-stones at Greyfriars. A neighbouring restaurateur had kept Bobby well with scraps, and the little dog lived in tolerably good quarters. It was not the fault of the dog, but of various busybodies and credulous fools, that the story of Bobby's alleged faithful mourning had been blown out of all proportion. When challenged by the pro-Bobby press, Gillies collected witnesses who stated that Bobby had been a stray mongrel, pitched into Greyfriars by the gardener at nearby Heriot's Hospital.

As we have seen, Eleanor Atkinson conjured up a history for Greyfriars Bobby, featuring the pathetic shepherd Auld Jock; it was perpetuated by Walt Disney, and still has followers today. The stalwart old Scot Forbes Macgregor deplored that "the myth of Auld Jock, the Pentland shepherd, is still going strong in song and story, like Santa Claus". The monster Forbes Macgregor himself created, John Gray the dog-owning policeman, is likely to be equally difficult to exorcise. In my biography of Greyfriars Bobby, I have finally allowed him to rise up from his pedestal, and free himself from the fetters of the sentimental Victorian notions about how a dog was supposed to behave: there is in fact good evidence that Bobby was an unconscious impostor. Thus Greyfriars Bobby, a dog enough for two, suitably has three different histories. But before the time has come to pass judgment on Greyfriars Bobby, the legend of this extraordinary dog must be put into its proper context in European canine mythology, in the next issue of *Fortean Times*. FT



This is an edited extract from Jan Bondeson's book *Greyfriars Bobby, the Most Faithful Dog in the World*, just published in paperback by Amberley Publishing, £10.99

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

JAN BONDESON is a senior lecturer and consultant rheumatologist at Cardiff University. He is the author of numerous books, including *Amazing Dogs* and *Queen Victoria's Stalker,* and a regular contributor to *Fortean Times*.

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Lightning Tree lore

As Britain's common ash faces the threat of *Chalara fraxinea*, JOHN REPPION celebrates the fascinating folklore of this magical tree and its legendary healing properties

JOHN REPPION lives in Liverpool. His day job is co-writing comic books with his wife Leah Moore but he also writes articles, short stories, and the odd book. John's first ever published work was in FT187.

The common ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) is the third most widespread tree species in Britain, making up 5.5 per cent of UK woodland, with an estimated further 12 million ashes in non-woodland areas. [1] Although the ash may not have the same iconic status as Ye Olde Oak, it is nevertheless a tree whose roots are firmly embedded in the history and folklore of the UK.

Ashes were once believed to be a magnet for lightning strikes – probably because of their tendency to split as they grow older, taking on the appearance of having been struck. "*Avoid an ash, It counts the flash*", runs one old rhyme. The ash's status as the Lightning Tree was generally considered to make it powerful and magical. [2]

Snakes were thought to have an antipathy to ashes, the flowers of the tree being hung outside homes to keep them at bay. If the repellent effects were unsuccessful, a poultice of ash leaves was thought to be an effective treatment for adder bites. [3] A spoonful of ash sap was once commonly given to newborn babies in parts of Scotland and England as a protection against ill health and witchcraft. [4] Warts could be transferred from a person to an ash by sticking pins first into the wart and then into the tree, where they would remain. [5] The passing of a naked infant or child through the deliberately split trunk of a sapling was once regarded as a cure for rickets (in Cheshire), hernias (in Cornwall), and broken bones, weak limbs and other ailments throughout Britain. Once the afflicted party had been passed through, the trunk was bound so that the tree could heal itself, and it was believed that the child would heal at the same rate. [6] In some cases, the ritual was thought to lead to a lifelong bond between the healed party and the healing tree, as detailed in Frazer's *The Golden Bough*: "Thomas Chillingworth, […] now about 34, was, when an infant of a year old, passed through a similar tree, now perfectly sound, which he preserves with so much care that he will not suffer a single branch to be touched, for it is believed the life of the patient depends on the life of the tree, and the moment that is cut down, be the patient ever so distant, the rupture returns, and a mortification ensues, and terminates in death". [7]

GUY EDWARDES / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: A common ash at sunset.

Ashes were once believed to be magnets for lightning

A Shrew Ash "made by boring a hole in ash tree, inserting therein a shrew mouse, alive, and then plugging up the hole" was once commonly kept by farmers in Warwickshire as a guard against the evil powers (!) of the shrew. The twigs and branches of the tree could be used to cure livestock of the pain and limb-loss they might otherwise suffer were a shrew to run over their bodies. [8] For some farmers, though, the healing power of the ash was evidently considered adequate without the ritual entombment of a rodent, as TF Thiselton-Dyer's 1889 volume *The Folk-lore of Plants* records that "*ash rods are still used in many parts of England for the cure of diseased sheep, cows, and horses*". [9]

Today, some of Britain's most ancient and impressive ashes include the Talley Abbey Ash in Carmarthenshire, Wales, whose gnarled trunk has a girth of over seven metres (23ft) at its widest point, and the Tinnis Ash, "*a low-growing, wind-blasted ash tree, its tortured branches as stiff and grey as a witch's hair*" located 5 miles (8 km) west of Selkirk, Scotland. [10] Though less visually striking than their Welsh and Scottish cousins, it is believed that some of the coppiced ash at Bradfield Woods in Suffolk may have taken root as long ago as the 11th century.

Following the first confirmed English case of the dreaded *Chalara fraxinea* fungus (aka ash dieback) in February this year, ash imports into the UK have been banned and 100,000 saplings destroyed. As of 24 November there were 222 confirmed infections in Britain, of which 121 were mature trees. [11] There has been a great deal of media speculation about the quantity of ashes which might be lost to the disease – the astonishing figure of 80 million being an "underestimate" according to Environment Secretary Owen Paterson. However, even though ash dieback has been known in Europe for 20 years, there is still no direct evidence to suggest that the fungus causes death in mature trees of 40 years or more. Furthermore, it may be that as many as 20 per cent of ash trees have a natural immunity to the disease. So, despite the doomsayers, there may be hope yet for Britain's old ashes in the fabled (self) healing properties of the Lightning Tree. FT

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1 www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-5NLCMT

2 TF Thiselton-Dyer, *The Folk-lore of Plants*, 1889

3 http://balisunset.hubpages.com/hub/Ash-Fraxinus-spp-as-Herbal-and-Traditional-Cure

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5 Marc Alexander, *A Compendium of Folklore, Myths & Customs of Britain*, Sutton Publishing 2002

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7 Sir James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: a Study of Magic & Religion*, 1890

8 Edwin Radford, Mona A Radford, *Encyclopaedia of Superstitions*, 1949

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Signs in the sky

TED HARRISON looks heavenward and wonders whether something significant is taking shape… or is it just a collision of clouds and religious conviction?

TED HARRISON is a former BBC religious correspondent, regular *FT* contributor and author of many books, including *Apocalypse When?*, now available from Darton, Longman and Todd.

Cloud watchers, with imagination, can see great things in the sky. Horses, dragons, castles – clouds can form themselves into amazing shapes. Some common formations, such as anvil clouds and mackerel skies, get their names from their resemblance to distinctly earthbound objects.

Yet to some observers the simulacra of the upper atmosphere do not simply form marvellous shapes, they convey potent messages. Signs and wonders in the heavens can be messages from on high, in particular when the clouds interact with the Sun to create strange and awesome effects.

Famously, the fourth-century Roman general Constantine saw a spectacular image in the midday sky before the battle that won him the emperor's throne (see **FT275:49**). On the strength of his victory he converted lock, stock and empire to Christianity, the new faith became the state religion – and the rest is history!

The Roman historian Eusebius described how Constantine saw above him, "a trophy of the cross arising from the light of the Sun, carrying the message, *In Hoc Signo Vinces*" – with this sign, you will conquer. The details of the story are disputed. If only the Romans had had digital cameras and mobile phones we might know exactly what Constantine saw.

Today there are several 'I saw Jesus in the sky' pictures in circulation. Some of them are not simply records of phenomena, but creations of the photo age, as their significance was not noted at the time, but only when photographs were later developed and examined.

On 22 September 2012, New Age healer and practitioner Don Reznicek was on a walk to celebrate the autumnal equinox when he felt compelled to take a photograph of the sky near San Rafael, California.

"I was two hours into my hike and… had a flash of inspiration: 'Why don't you direct your iPhone up toward the Sun and take a picture?'"

The afternoon Sun was fierce, and Don couldn't see the screen clearly as he clicked. "The photo I took was minimised in my screen so all I saw was the Sun and a white speck," which he thought might be a small fragment of dust on the lens. It was only when he downloaded the image onto his computer that he saw that the white speck was something very strange. "It had an amazing silhouette, which looked like a diamond shape with an oval orb around it." Don also saw wings and at first thought he might have captured a picture of the Archangel Raphael. Others who saw the picture suggested he had taken a picture of Christ. "There are intersecting lines within the diamond. You could pull out a cross pretty easily."

The Godreports website reported the New Age healer as saying, "I have a connection to the angelic realm. I listen to a lot of messages from people who claim to channel angels." He said he felt close to the Archangels Michael and Raphael, but reserved a special place for Jesus Christ. [1]

The age of the camcorder has produced movie footage of heavenly signs. More than just fleeting snapshots of odd light effects and self-sculpted clouds, video images show them as animated silhouettes on the biggest of giant screens. Footage shot of a storm rolling over Grand Falls, New Brunswick, and posted on YouTube, lasts almost two minutes and shows a giant face moving across the sky. Travelling from right to left, it has been likened to the profile of a Roman god or an Indian chief. The YouTube caption asks: "Do you believe this is a divine occurrence or a demonic occurrence?" [2] Freak cloud formation, it seems, is not an option.

DON REZNICEK

BELOW: A detail of the photo taken by Don Reznicek on a walk in September 2012.

Yet in the case of a French video-cameraman, a detailed scientific explanation is offered for his amazing picture. In the summer of 2011, Luc Perrot was working on Reunion Island when he captured an extraordinary image of a halo in the sky, at the centre of which there appeared to be a man with raised arms. He was on location at 2,000ft (600m) and says: "as I looked up I noticed a shadow floating on clouds surrounded by a rainbow. It took me by complete surprise. When I looked back at the footage, it gave me the feeling of divine apparition."

Yet the Christ-like image was probably a rare, double meteorological event. What Perrot captured was a fogbow with a Brocken spectre in the centre. The halo was a circular rainbow and the supposed figure of Christ was a giant shadow of the cameraman himself, together with his tripod, projected onto the clouds in front of, and level with him. The conditions were right, the Sun was behind him and he was viewing the scene from a raised peak.

A strange apparition in the clouds spotted and photographed by a passenger from a plane was made even stranger when it was discovered that, unknown to the first photographer, a second passenger on the same flight had taken an almost identical picture. The grandmother of Tracey Brauchla from Arizona showed her a picture she had taken through the window when on an internal flight in the US. It appeared to show an image of a long-robed figure in a traditional Christ-like pose. Later, Tracey was amazed to discover an almost identical picture in the autobiography of the rock star Marilyn Manson. [3] His grandmother had also, it seems, taken a photograph from a plane, and, according to Manson, it was one of his favourite possessions. He said, though, that when he had showed the picture to his teachers at school he was told it was a hoax and reprimanded for being blasphemous. The experience put him off religion for years. The two grandmothers must have been on the same flight, Tracey concluded, to have

LUC PERROT / CATERS NEWS AGENCY

ABOVE: The Christ-like figure captured by photogarpher Luc Perrot: is it a miraculous image or a meteorological rarity?

seen the same vision and taken the same picture. Perhaps – although a look at other supposed 'photos of Jesus' allegedly taken through aeroplane windows reveals that variants of what appears to be the same image have been circulated time and again, with different dates (from the 1960s to the present day) and different locations (New Zealand, the USA, Canada, the Antarctic). [4]

Multiple sightings involving watchers aware of each other are not so rare. Indeed, there are a number of reports of large groups of people simultaneously seeing holy images in the sky.

In November 1982, 500 pupils from Emilia Auginaldo Elementary School on the island of Luzon in the Philippines witnessed a vision in the sky, according to Share International, the organisation that believes that a mystical and divine being known as Maitreya has returned to the world.

The event, it is reported, started one afternoon when a 10-year-old girl looked up at the sky and saw three angels, Mother Mary with a baby in her arms and an old man standing next to her. Other children saw the same vision and described what they saw in great detail: Mary was wearing a gown and a gold crown on her head; the angels had golden hair and wore long flaming gowns; one of them had a key in her hand. [5] One teacher who saw the same felt an awesome force making her kneel down.

If only the Romans had had digital cameras...

When religious conviction encounters oddities in the sky, it is not long before they are imbued with significance.

One day in 1965, Elvis Presley was travelling through the Arizona Desert when he suddenly shouted for the bus to stop. He leapt off and rushed out into the dry landscape looking up at the sky. He was, his companions later verified, in a highly emotional state. He said that he could see the Antichrist in the clouds, in the form of Joseph Stalin and then the holy mirage morphed into the smiling face of Jesus. "Tears were rolling down his cheeks," recalled his hairdresser Larry Geller who witnessed the moment. " 'I don't have to believe in God any more', Elvis said, 'I know he loves me and everyone.'" [6]

The early Christians were forever looking for signs, wonders and omens overhead. It is where Jesus told them to look for advance warning of His Second Coming. Some contemporary Christians, too, have their eyes focused on the heavens – and not just the sky above, but distant space. In 2010, doomsday watchers were convinced that a strange cross shape formation photographed by NASA's space telescope was an early warning of the return of Jesus. This apparition caused only short-term excitement, while some signs in the sky have a long-lived impact.

The Fatima apparitions of 1917 created a centre of pilgrimage and the nature of the phenomena and the significance of the message are hotly debated to this day (see **FT197:8-9** and passim). 70,000 gathered on 13 October to join the three child seers to witness the visible sign promised to them by the Virgin Mary.

What they saw was the miracle of the Sun. It broke through the clouds and danced. Even doubters saw something. "I could see the Sun, like a very clear disc, with its sharp edge, which gleamed without hurting the eyes or damaging the retina," reported eye-witness Jose Garrett, a professor of Natural Sciences from the University of Coimbra. "The Sun's disc did not remain immobile, it had a giddy motion, it spun round upon itself in a mad whirl… There were also changes of colour in the atmosphere. Looking at the Sun, I noticed that everything was becoming darkened. I looked first at the nearest objects and then extended my glance further afield as far as the horizon. I saw everything had assumed an amethyst colour." [7]

Without realising it, perhaps Prof Garrett had overloaded his eyes with the unprotected light from the Sun and created optical illusions. Possibly, the stories of Fatima have grown with the telling. Perhaps the psychological effect of a huge crowd willing a miracle should not be discounted.

The skies do create visions – but are they of ultimate significance or merely fleeting interest? It depends how you look at them: with wonder, faith, or imagination... FT

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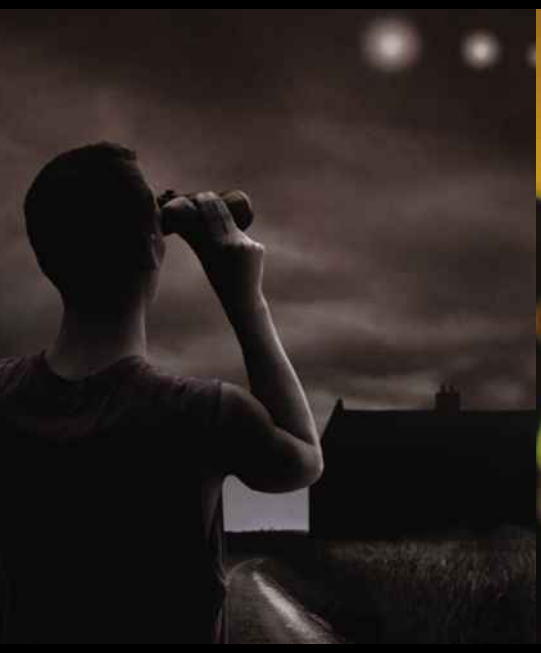

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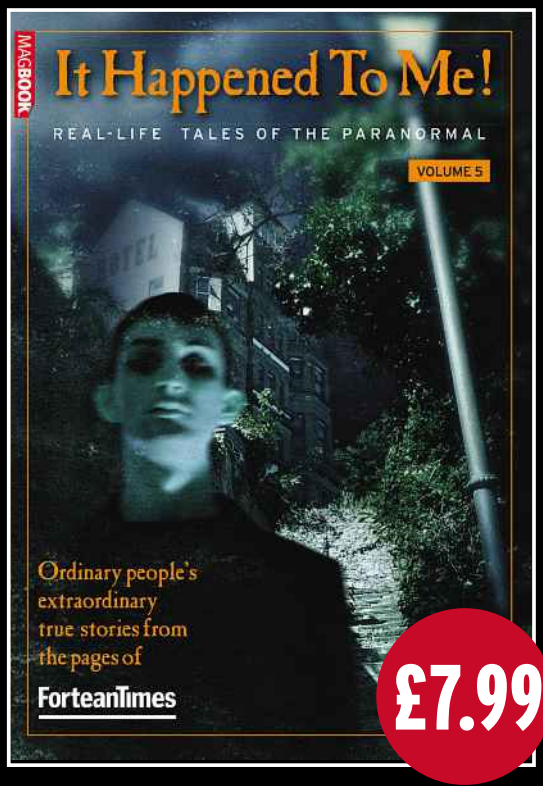

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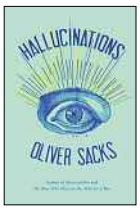
A natural history of visions

Oliver Sacks examines the hallucinations of the sane to bring the focus back to their organic origins and to shine a light on some familiar twilight psychic phenomena



Hallucinations
Oliver Sacks

Picador 2012
Hb, 322pp, £18.99, ISBN 9781447208259
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'Hallucination', in its modern sense, is a term of surprisingly recent origin: introduced in 1817 by the pioneering French alienist Jean-Etienne Esquirol in his quest to bring a new precision to the murky landscape of subjective vision. 'Illusions', in his scheme, were scrambled interpretations of genuine sense-data, such as a shadow construed as a physical object or voices heard in a babbling stream. 'Hallucinations', by contrast, referred to pure inventions of the mind.

But Esquirol's new terminology came loaded with assumptions that changed the status of these private phenomena. Encounters that had previously been described as 'apparitions' were now labelled as a form of mental pathology, and increasingly as a symptom of insanity.

Oliver Sacks's enthralling book sets out to reverse this drift, which he believes has marginalised the common experience of hallucinations. Many of the personal accounts he offers up here were given reluctantly, by subjects who had worried silently about them for years. This is a long-standing problem: the prevalence of phantom limb syndrome in amputees, for example, was not recognised until Weir Mitchell, the founding father of American neurology, patiently elicited dozens of case histories from soldiers who had kept their strange sensations to themselves for fear of ending up in an asylum.

Of those who admit to hallucinating, many reject the label because of its judgmental implication that their experience is delusory. But Sacks's embrace of the term is typically generous: he is always looking to inhabit the subject's inner world as fully as possible and to approach the experience on its own terms. His survey echoes those of the Society of Psychical Research, who collected reports of such phenomena among the general population in the 1880s.

In order to frame the subject in this way, he boldly ignores perhaps the most prominent category of hallucinations: those experienced in schizophrenia and other psychoses. This allows him to pay unusually close attention to 'hallucinations in the sane': those associated with organic disorders such as migraine, epilepsy, sleep deprivation or Parkinson's disease, and the twilight psychic phenomena of doppelgängers, bereavement hallucinations, ghosts, night hags and religious visions.

Despite their wide spectrum of possible causes, hallucinations have many commonalities. Unlike illusions, which often express preoccupations of the conscious mind and can be profitably subjected to analysis, they tend to have a random or mechanical quality, and a mind of their own. Little people are frequently seen marching around ('Lilliputian visions'); words or musical notes are crisply legible, but turn out to be nonsensical when read; 'numerosity' turns single figures or objects into crowds or phalanxes; there is a tendency to the exotic, such as figures in Oriental dress or visions of the Taj Mahal. These objects are not hazy or ghostly but pin-sharp, almost more real than reality itself. It is often clear to the subject that they are all in the mind, but the realisation has no effect on their confidently autonomous existence.

> **"He found himself negotiating a New York bus full of aliens with compound eyes"**

Sacks has, as usual, three outstandingly rich sources for his material. The first is his (lightly anonymised) cohort of patients, ex-patients, friends and the wider circle of correspondents who have discussed their conditions with him over many decades. Throughout his career he has been a magnet for anomalous and exceptional cases, and the range of hallucinations that have been presented to him over the years is probably unique.

Second, he has delved deeply into the medical annals, and particularly those of the 19th century. Many neuroscientists now regard this literature as outdated, but Sacks has a special affection for it: partly because it is where the classic cases and first descriptions of many conditions are to be found, and partly because doctors in the Victorian era were highly trained in the kind of observation that he values. As medical diagnoses and treatments have improved, careful description has become less necessary, replaced by tick-boxes of symptoms that render the patient irrelevant.

Finally, and characteristically, he draws on his own self-observations. He has carefully examined and recalled many odd experiences, from false memories to episodes of phantom body image, but the centrepiece here is his wide experience with hallucinogenic drugs. On a large dose of scopolamine, the deliriant poison in nightshades, he had a long and involved conversation with imaginary friends and a talking spider; withdrawing inadvertently from the sedative chloral hydrate, he found himself negotiating a New York bus full of aliens with egg-shaped heads and compound eyes. As he explains with great honesty and insight, it was experiences such as these that originally triggered his desire to map the wilder shores of consciousness – but it was only by giving up drugs that his ambition was achieved.

Like Sacks's previous book, *Musicophilia*, this is essentially a miscellany, a lifetime's gleanings and gatherings; but it amounts to more than the sum of its parts. By assembling an expansive natural history of hallucinations he reveals the inner life of the senses as a riotous carnival whose greatest spectacle may be mundane reality itself. "All these effects", he observes, "seem to show, by default, what a colossal and complicated achievement normal vision is".

Mike Jay

Fortean Times Verdict
YOU SIMPLY WON'T BELIEVE YOUR EYES **9**

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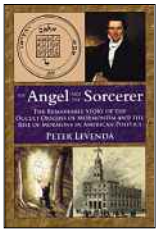

The Angel and the Sorcerer

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Ibis Press 2012

Pb, 191pp, $18.95/£18.99, ISBN 139780892542000

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £17.09

The title of this book sets its tone from the start. The Angel is of course Moroni, who appeared to Joseph Smith and showed him where to find the golden plates he then miraculously translated into English as the Book of Mormon. But the Sorcerer is the prophet himself, who is known to have used scrying methods to search for buried treasure before he found the plates and founded a religion.

There's actually very little in this book that a moderately informed reader – someone who has read a couple of critical articles about Mormonism's origins, history and practices – wouldn't already know. We're told that the young Smith was a treasure-hunter, that the Mormons had a troubled and often violent early history (Smith himself was murdered at the age of just 38), that they were polygamous until the US government threatened them with massive legal sanctions unless they gave up the practice, that their secret Temple rituals have a resemblance to masonic rituals, and that today's Mormons tend to be socially conservative and many of them in America vote Republican.

And that's about it; nothing new there.

But Peter Levenda has a strange way of presenting his information. Throughout the book he stresses that he's completely impartial, that he's not criticising Mormonism, but just presenting the facts so that the reader can make up his own mind. "My intention is not to come down on one side or another in that particular debate. What I want to do, however, is to make the data available in order to enable a reader who may not be aware of Mormonism's strange history to make an informed decision..."

He protests, as the Bard might have said, just a tad too much.

He rightly points out that in parts of North America in the early 19th century it was quite common for poor people to use folk magic to search for treasure, or to locate lost items; Smith was by no means unique. But having told us that, time and time again he refers to Smith's scrying to emphasise both the "occult" origins of Mormonism and what he sees as its constant drive for wealth, right up to the perhaps dodgy business dealings of some Mormons in recent years. He slips in the rider that of course members of other religions can also be less than perfect, citing Richard Nixon as perhaps not the best example of a Quaker – then he goes right on painting the Mormon religion (as opposed to some individual Mormons) as being characterised by greed.

He states that "Mormons were among the earliest prospectors of the Gold Rush... Once again, we have the image of Mormons seeking treasure under the earth." Fine – but what about all the prospectors who were Baptists or Unitarians or atheists?

He also makes assumptions without evidence. The fact that in the 1980s the Mormon Church tried to cover up the content of a letter (later revealed as a forgery) about Smith's discovery of the golden plates "is evidence that the Mormons themselves were insecure in their faith and harboured deep suspicions that Smith was engaged in occult practices and that the result of those practices was the conjuration of a demon which then gave Smith a bogus scripture". Well, no; all it really shows is that the Church was trying to cover up a potentially embarrassing account that was at variance with official Church history; all the rest is his supposition.

He employs argument by assertion again to conclude that Mormonism "is basically a hermetic and occult version of Christianity, a kind of 'Christian Kabbalah'... albeit with presidential candidates and a famous choir". But he seems to have a low opinion of esotericists in general: "Kabbalists, occultists and alchemists all pretend to decode the Biblical text". Maybe some of them do pretend; but for Levenda to make such a blanket pejorative statement about all esotericists reveals more about him than about those he is criticising.

The pretence of even-handedness, the style of reasoning and the bending of logic give this book a whiff of dishonesty, making it difficult to know how much you can rely on any of the information he gives – a shame, because some of the detail is fascinating.

The final chapters examine Mitt Romney and his relatives and associates in the context of Mormonism, business and politics, and not in any favourable light. One suspects that this might have had some bearing on the publication of a book on Mormonism in 2012.

David V Barrett

Fortean Times Verdict

SOME INTERESTING DETAIL BUT TOO BIASED TO BE WORTHWHILE **4**

The True History of Merlin the Magician

Anne Lawrence-Mathers

Yale University Press 2012

Hb, 266pp, illus, notes, bib, ind, £25.00/$40.00, ISBN 9780300144895

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £22.50

A subtly ambiguous title, this, which one might assume was going to be another book tracing the 'historical origins' of Merlin to the Welsh poet Myrddin; in fact it takes a rather more interesting tack. Putting aside such figures as Myrddin, Anne Lawrence-Mathers starts from what seems to be the inarguable position that 'Merlin the Magician' is essentially a fully-formed invention of 12th century chronicler Geoffrey of Monmouth, who, apart from featuring Merlin and an entire chapter of his 'prophecies' in his dubious *History of the Kings of Britain*, also provided a separate *Life of Merlin*. She then points out that from the mid-12th to early 16th centuries, Merlin was accepted as a real historical figure. Ambiguous as ever, Merlin is thus treated here not so much as a real person who became fictionalised, but as a fictional figure that, for nearly 400 years, aspired to reality. Indeed, our fascination with questions such as the relationship between him and a putatively 'real' original such as Myrddin, long after Merlin was removed from 'history', would suggest that this aspiration was actually remarkably successful.

Lawrence-Mathers is excellent on the context to all this, pointing out that the timing of Merlin's appearance was crucial, it being shortly before mediæval Christian attitudes hardened against magic and prophecy, and examining the ways in which 'he' managed to avoid the pitfalls of having a demonic father, practising magic and prophesying, none of which were likely to endear him to the religious establishment. After discussing his origin and Geoffrey's part in constructing it, successive chapters examine Merlin's relationship to, and practice of, astrology, magic and prophecy (interestingly, the prophecies' format follows an archetypal, international pattern

– see **FT251:56–57**), then the theological status of his human/demonic parentage, his reception in Europe and his transformation into the knowingly-fictional character that appears in mediæval romance. And, of course, his long-lasting influence, which, for a figure so loosely-anchored in reality, is astounding.

Discussing both the sources and their political and religious background, Lawrence-Mathers wears her considerable learning lightly, and the text is both easy to read and fascinating. It is, though, a small book in large type and one rather feels that, while this is an undoubtedly important exploration of the territory, there may be more to discover. One area of interest might be a comparison of Merlin, a fictional magician treated as real, and other figures (such as the poet Virgil or the Chinese statesman Zhuge Liang), who were real people to start with, but that the passage of time turned into fictional magicians. In the meantime, though, we should be grateful to Lawrence-Mathers for a fascinating book that opens up new aspects of Arthurian studies, mediaeval magic, prophecy and that curious interface where 'fiction' and 'reality' merge. Highly recommended.

Steve Moore

Fortean Times Verdict
A TRULY MAGICAL VERSION OF MERLIN **9**

Dante's Inferno

Hunt Emerson & Kevin Jackson

Knockabout 2012

Pb, 88pp, illus, £11.99, ISBN 9780861661695

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £10.79

Dante's 14th century allegory is given a bit of a makeover by *FT*'s very own Hunt Emerson, with a splendid essay by Kevin Jackson.

Emerson's version is a great intro to a masterpiece *and* a rip-roaring farce, and Jackson explains the more obscure jokes. Have a giggle and then tackle the original with confidence.

Val Stevenson

Fortean Times Verdict
FANTASTIC REVISIONING OF A MASTERPIECE BY AN FT REGULAR **9**

Heads or (odd) tales

The provenance of 'cursed' artefacts is secondary to the mayhem they give rise to among authors and readers

The Quest for the Hexham Heads

Paul Screeton

CFZ Press 2012

Pb, 256pp, illus, notes, bib, £14.99, ISBN 9781905723942

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £1499

Some stories are just too good to be allowed to die and the Hexham Heads is one of them (see Stuart Ferrol's feature 'In Search of the Hexham Heads', **FT 294:43–47, 295:45–49**). I described the legend of the two small evil-looking stone carvings unearthed in the garden of an ordinary house in Hexham, Northumberland, by two children in 1971 as "a classic in the supernatural field that remains an unsolved mystery to this day".

Paul Screeton has produced an almost definitive account, pulling together three decades of lore into a romp through one of the weirdest stories in fortean literature. Almost definitive, because the quest referred to in the title – to discover the heads' current whereabouts – is ongoing. This mystery adds to the power and longevity of the legend.

My friend and colleague, the archæologist Anne Ross (see Obituary **FT295:26**), was drawn into a series of events that would not be out of place in an MR James story when the two 'Celtic style' heads arrived at her Southampton home for examination in 1972. She and her family were tormented by a terrifying apparition in the form of a werewolf. Her youngest son, Richard Charles, gives his own account of the creature in a postscript to Screeton's book. In 1994, his mother told me that she had been unaware that similar hauntings – including the appearance of a half man, half sheep creature – had occurred near the place of their discovery. She had made the mistake of going on record to say she believed the head's baleful influence might have been absorbed from a Celtic shrine in Hexham.

The joker in the pack was lorry driver Des Craigie, who popped up shortly after her story was published to claim he had made the heads from artificial stone for his daughter to play with when he lived at the house.

I could appreciate her dilemma because in 1990 I became the part-owner of a 'haunted stone head' from West Yorkshire that had been the subject of similar lurid headlines. This artefact became the centre of much attention when Andy Roberts and I put it on display following our talk on 'cursed heads' at the 2011 FT Unconvention. Like the Hexham Heads, our head was just a lump of stone carved with a face, according to one version in 1978, and buried by a former owner of the hall who was "sitting on his cloud rocking with laughter." So what was going on? Are these artefacts really imbued with an ancient Celtic curse or are these stories just creations of overactive imaginations? My view is pretty much the same as that articulated by Doc Shiels in a letter quoted by Screeton: 'I really don't think it matters too much when the heads were made, or who made them, the things worked and that's what matters.' The power of 'cursed' artefacts, whether they be 'Celtic heads' or Egyptian mummy cases, ultimately emanates from the enchantment generated in the minds of those who handle and write about them, as the content of this book amply testifies.

Screeton's background as a journalist and his amiable and eccentric writing style helps the reader navigate through quite a bit of padding – including diversions into speculation about 'window areas', wulvers, the stone tape theory, exorcism, Celtic mythology and much else – before we reach the meat, as it were.

On page 172 he suggests the movement of the heads, whatever their provenance, might have "allowed a portal to open and release a daimonic reality hybrid." This simple act, he adds, may have generated 'a warp in the time continuum whereby the carved head industry of [Celtic Britain] inspired a concrete plant worker and later a schoolboy…to follow suit via a subliminal level.'

At this point I wondered if the author was either pulling my leg or about to fall into the same elephant trap that snared Anne Ross. But then in his conclusion Screeton appears to snap out of the spell woven by the heads and admits he may have failed to see 'the larger picture'. The larger picture being?: "there's no denying those artefacts' provenance was essentially irrelevant to the mayhem and mystery they caused. Essentially they belong to myth."

Dave Clarke

Fortean Times Verdict
MAYHEM, MYSTERY AND (MAYBE) OVERACTIVE IMAGINATIONS **8**

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Nobody expects...

Primary documents reveal the durability and horror of the Inquisition in Latin America – and its administrative precision

The Inquisition in New Spain, 1536–1820

A Documentary History

Trans, ed: John F Chuchiak IV

The Johns Hopkins University Press 2012

Pb, 464pp, bib, ind, £18.00, ISBN 9781421403861

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £18.00

Here is the Inquisition under the light not of sooty mediæval torches but of brilliant Mexican sun. King Phillip II established the Inquisition of New Spain in 1536; it lasted, incredibly, into the 1820s, undone by the Mexican Revolution.

Edited and translated by John F Chuchiak IV, this indispensable volume makes primary sources related to Spain's New World Inquisitional activity available in English for the first time. Importantly, with the supplied primary documents, Inquisition scholars can observe how the institution adapted to an entirely new, multiethnic society. For the organisation's behavior was a reflection of the concerns and anxieties of the region's inhabitants, or at least the non-indigenous ones. In examining the Inquisition with social, political, and economic factors in mind, Chuchiak's work is in keeping with recent developments in Inquisition studies. More than simply compiling lists of atrocities, emerging scholarship is keen to probe deeper. The question becomes: What role did the institution play in the formation of societies and cultures?

As this volume consists mostly of primary documents, Chuchiak's effort is directed toward the translation and arrangement of the material. However, he does provide a fine introduction to the Inquisition's history. Notes to guide the reader are also included with many of the primary documents. For the most part, though, the material – ranging from the highest of Royal decrees to trembling testimonies given by the very lowest members of the social strata – speaks for itself. The work is arranged into three sections, the first being documents that outline how the Inquisition was to operate. These documents formed the rule books of all Inquisitional activity, ranging from roles and responsibilities of tribunal members to how the trials were to be conducted. Included here too are lists of prohibited books. Sorry, no works of hydromancy, pyromancy, or necromancy permitted.

The second section deals in crime and punishment. Documents list the many transgressions against the faith that fell under the Inquisition's purview. These edicts of faith prohibited the typical heathen activities you might expect – witchcraft, blasphemy, bigamy, gambling, failure to tithe, etc. – but there were also temptations unique to the New World. A 1620 document, for example, forbids the use of peyote. This section also covers the disturbing realities of Inquisitional torture, which, Chuchiak notes, was less common than earlier studies estimated. This, however, does not make a document such as 'Instructions for Administering Questioning under Torture using the Rack' any less chilling, as utter barbarism is laid out with systematic efficiency. Also included are actual transcripts from torture sessions, still extremely unsettling despite being over 300 years old.

Torture was punishing, but it was not punishment. The sentences were carried out at the *auto de fe*, a ceremony which the entire community was expected to attend. Penalties ranged from fines and public shaming to lashes, banishment or death. These highly visible organisational expressions highlight a paradox: the Inquisition was both extremely private and highly public. Denunciations and trials occurred with total secrecy: punishments became social events. The third section collects investigations and testimonies from trials, where crimes such as blasphemy, bigamy, "Jewish and Crypto-Jewish Practices", Protestantism, sorcery and divination were investigated. These trials underscore the Inquisition's role as a mechanism of religious and political control. In stamping out crime and sin, the tribunals had the unique task of both punishing and saving the misguided. Reading the primary documents, the social control aspects of the Inquisition become all the more apparent. This is especially true for the New World, where a process of cultural consolidation was underway. As self-denunciation of crimes was encouraged and accusers were guaranteed anonymity, the Inquisition became – by accident or design – a kind of surveillance state: 1536 begins to look like 1984.

The Inquisition was a vast machine of recordkeeping, regulatory precision and meticulous accounting. Chuchiak includes many of these records, from prison expense reports to guidelines written in the 16th century equivalent of legalese. The organisation was a bureaucratic powerhouse, frightening for its authority and its attention to detail. The Inquisition has passed into history: bureaucracy is alive and well.

Mike Pursley

Fortean Times Verdict

A MIX OF TORTURE RECORDS AND TORTUROUS RECORD-KEEPING **9**

The Megalithic Empire

MJ Harper & HL Vered

Nathan Carmody 2012

Hb, 253pp, illus,bib, ind, £19.95, ISBN 9780954291112

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £17.95

The Megalithic Empire begins with an intelligent discussion of an interesting question: without cartography or writing, how were prehistoric societies able to undertake long-distance journeys? Harper and Vered argue that megalithic monuments served not only as landmarks but as a guide to creating rudimentary "compasses" which would help the travellers orient the direction of their journey against the position of the morning sunrise. This is helpfully diagrammed with a few ideal megalithic circles rather than any actual ones…

From here, Harper and Vered postulate a complex prehistoric civilisation or network of cultures, 'Megalithia'. Its cultural influence waned with the arrival of literacy, but traces linger and some saints are "megalithic", notably St Michael. The proliferation of dedications to St Michael in some areas of Britain apparently indicate the survival of this culture, since he is "fairly obscure" and Christians would "probably not" name a church after him.

Harper and Vered make a lot of this kind of assertion – for instance, that the *Odyssey* was "originally a song-line" or that Spenser is "a prime candidate for the authorship of *Beowulf*", as well as more commonplace claims such as that Green Men are "obviously pagan". As interesting as these claims are, it's hard to follow them up, since the book has neither references nor a bibliography.

There are some enjoyable ideas, and the beginning of the book contains a vivid attempt to invite the reader to visualise the problems that activities we take for granted pose in preliterate societies. However, the authors keep needling academics for being "credulous" while simultaneously engaging in this kind of speculative flight of fancy.

James Holloway

Fortean Times Verdict

SOME INTERESTING IDEAS BUT NO MEANS TO JUDGE THEIR VALUE **5**

ALSO RECEIVED

We leaf through a small selection of the dozens of books that have arrived at Fortean Towers in recent months...

Goblinproofing One's Chicken Coop

Reginald Bakely

Conari Press 2012

Pb, 190pp, illus, $14.95, ISBN 9781573245326

This tongue-in-cheek account of the author's "campaign against the fairy kingdom" is a bit of whimsy. For Bakeley (aided by writer and folklorist Clint Marsh), fairies, gnomes, boggarts, elves and the like are at the root of "nearly every problem imaginable". This is a novel tour of classic fairy-lore, but be warned: the advice on cooking gnomes is not for the squeamish.

Paranormal Essex

David Scanlan & Paul Robins

ISBN 9781848684607

Ghosts of York

Rob Kirkup

ISBN 9781848682368

Yorkshire Witches

Eileen Rennison

ISBN 9781445602929

Irish Ghosts

Peter Underwood

ISBN 9781445606521

Haunted Hostelries of Shropshire

Andrew Homer

ISBN 9781445602011

Ghost Taverns of the North East

Darren W Ritson & Michael J Hallowell

ISBN 9781445607535

Amberley Publishing

Pb, illus, £12.99

The UK is blessed with (or haunted by) a rich and diverse folklore that is rooted in the past yet in constant renewal. It is perfectly matched by a myriad of small presses that specialise in preserving the county lore. And that in turn is complemented by some talented local (and national) writers who have invested their time and energy becoming masters of their subject matter. Put them together and they do a valuable job, preserving snapshots of regional beliefs and lesser byways of local history. Amberley is an energetic example of such a press, with more than 1,200 titles under their belt. These books – and many others in their backlist – should interest visitors to all parts of the UK, as well as armchair scholars investigating local mysteries.

The Science Magpie

Simon Flynn

Icon Books 2012

Hb, 278pp, bib, illus, £12.99, ISBN 9781848314153

Simon Flynn is a successful publisher with designs on teaching science. He certainly has a eye for amusing scientific stories, facts, poems and diagrams. Here he presents 127 of them in a way which should entertain non-scientists while hopefully stimulating an interest in science, deduction and 'logical thinking'. A good present for a young mind.

The Man Who Would Be Jack

David Bullock

Robson Press 2012

Hb, 294pp, £16.99, ISBN 9781849543408

There are many candidates for the identity of Jack the Ripper and one of the less well-known is Thomas Hayne Cutbush, committed to Broadmoor in 1891. Police never took seriously the *Sun* newspaper's claims that Cutbush could be responsible for the series of savage murders in Whitechapel despite his claim of "cutting up girls and laying them out". At least two previous books have suggested that attention was diverted from Cutbush to protect his uncle, then a serving police officer. Bullock gathers all the known Cutbush material and presents the murders, investigations and Cutbush's life as a sort of novel. It certainly reads like a fictional narrative but it is well done – suspenseful and interesting – and more convincing than Patricia Cornwell's fingering of Walter Sickert.

Magic

A Very Short Introduction

Owen Davies

Oxford University Press 2012

Pb, 135pp, illus, refs, ind, £7.99, ISBN 9780199588022

Magic is the 299th title in OUP's excellent 'very short introduction' series in which experts in their field present a compacted "way in" to subjects we might wish to know more about but haven't the time to actually study. Davies is a professor of social history at the University of Hertfordshire with several books on the history of magic under his belt. He covers the belief in and practice of magic in all ages, including the origin of much stage trickery in the ancient performance of rites and divinations; much of which sets the context for the modern separation between scientific materialism and 'magical thinking'. A very handy little book with a thorough reference section... ideal for schools.

FORTEAN FICTION

London Falling

Paul Cornell

Tor 2012

Pb, £12.99, 416pp, ISBN 9780230763210

There's something irresistible about splicing genres together; especially when we're talking mash-ups of police procedural and supernatural horror. In his new novel, Paul Cornell – well known for his *Doctor Who* scripts, books, and audio dramas, as well as his career in comics – begins in a vein of gritty crime drama, with undercover police officers working as 'soldiers' for London's biggest criminal boss, and gradually segues into a full-blown occult thriller. And as things turn weird, four very different coppers must team up to pursue a 'suspect' with the power to manipulate time and space, mess with people's memories and travel around the city on a sort of psychical Circle Line. In the process, our heroes have to come to terms with their own inner demons, and one another, as well as learning to harness a new way of seeing London in terms of its lines of supernatural power and half-forgotten ghosts: what they find is a terrifying alternative city invisible to everyone else, a deeper, darker layer of evil running like a rhizome beneath all the drug deals and murders on the metropolis's ugly surface. Cornell's hidden London has none of the portentousness of psychogeographical cliché, though; so instead of Hawskmoor and Jack the Ripper we get a varied feast of less well-trodden forteana: bogus social workers, football curses, phantom ships on the Thames, New Age conventions, a theory of ghosts and a witch's talking cat; and all filtered through such thoroughly modern detection tools as Google Earth, Twitter and smart phone apps.

London Falling barrels along at a perfect, page-turning pace, and while it perhaps never genuinely chills, it never fails to compel and entertain. It's not perfect – there are times when Cornell tries to cram too much exposition or character information into a sentence for literary comfort – but the story, with its nice sense of police character and routine confronting another reality, exerts a grip, the characters are genuinely likeable, and the ending leaves the door open for a sequel that I'm already impatient for. Hugely enjoyable, and recommended.

David Sutton

SEND REVIEW COPIES OF DVDS, BLU-RAYS AND GAMES TO:
FORTEAN TIMES, PO BOX 71602, LONDON E17 0QD.

The Hobbit

Dir Peter Jackson, USA/New Zealand 2012

On UK release from 12 December

I'm one of those Tolkien fans who love the books; *revere* them, even. I was pleased overall with Peter Jackson's three films based on Tolkien's famous trilogy – itself by no means flawless, yet still a masterpiece of literary synthesis. Something similar could be said for Jackson's cinematic take on *Lord of the Rings*: a flawed but magnificent achievement, which garnered a mass Oscar win at its conclusion. So my expectations were high for Jackson's take on *The Hobbit*.

One contentious issue in this big screen adaptation is the technology used to render it. The 48 frames per second film process takes considerable adjustment on the part of the viewer. It leaves static scenes of exposition looking sterile and studio-bound, lacking the lustre of that old celluloid magic, that world elsewhere, as if the vintage aura of an old master has been cleaned away with laser surgery. It's only when we get to Rivendell, and the glow around Cate Blanchett's ethereal Galadriel, that we regain that sense of being in that world elsewhere, an atmospheric place of darkness and light, disbelief suspended, where magic happens, even in the crummiest fleapit. But Jackson is bullish about the use of 48 fps and in the staggering WETA Workshop and Digital action scenes you can see why: no blur, an infinite amount of pin-sharp detail on display, the breakneck speed of events (in the lair of the repulsive Goblin King especially). The technology also enhances the crispness of 3D. On this evidence, that's a minor issue for Jackson, whose trademark 2D visual flair is everywhere: the destruction of Durin's kingdom in Erebor is a stunning set piece; the dragon Smaug's vast, fiery presence is glimpsed magnificently at the film's opening; and the depiction of gargantuan vistas across which endless bodies move can leave you open-mouthed with wonder. Jackson's peerless directorial skill and vision has lost none of its power to thrill.

The acting talent on display is once again formidable, headed by Sir Ian McKellen's towering performance as Gandalf. Martin Freeman as Bilbo displays a suitable balance of bumbling facial and bodily bemusement and wily mischief in equal measure, the perfect foil to Andy Serkis's mesmerising vocalisation of Gollum in the riddle scene. Some of the humour (provided by the dwarves) can outstay its welcome and some of the exposition might be irksome to those who know their Tolkien when at moments the back-story is simply spelled out.

The narrative is another contentious issue. Whatever the original intention was, at some point Peter Jackson and Fran Walsh decided that this would be *The Hobbit* with appendices – that they would try to give us as much of Middle-earth as they could within the bounds of what *The Hobbit's* narrative could allow. Tolkien couldn't help himself in that respect, either. It is in those scenes – the council between Gandalf, Saruman, Elrond and Galadriel at Rivendell especially, the inclusion of Radegast the Brown (Sylvester McCoy) – that the film takes on a darker, deeper gravitas, a gravitas that Tolkien had seeded in the book's later passages as his imaginative intent grew in the telling of it, rather like the tales of Middle-earth themselves.

After a leisurely first third, the action rollicks along as Bilbo is forced to prove himself to Thorin Oakenshield and his 12 dwarf companions in his quest back to his former home, once Erebor, now the Lonely Mountain. There are hairbreadth escapes and bone-crunching brutality aplenty in the action scenes, something Jackson excelled at in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, as he does here.

This first instalment of Peter Jackson's *Hobbit* is by no means perfect; I probably won't see it 12 times before the second part arrives as I did *Fellowship* before *The Two Towers* came along; half a dozen, maybe. Whether Jackson creates the sense of the breadth and depth of Tolkien's Middle-earth by the end of the trilogy that he clearly intends... well, that remains to be seen. On this evidence, however, he's well on his way to doing just that.

Nick Cirkovic

Fortean Times Verdict

THREE-HOUR EPIC IS FINE START TO JACKSON'S TRILOGY **8**

VHS

Dir David Bruckner, Joe Swanberg, Glenn McQuaid, Adam Wingard, Ti West, Radio Silence, US 2012

On UK release from 18 Jan

VHS arrives on these shores with a considerable amount of fanboy 'buzz', as well as the twin lures – irresistible to cineastes of a certain age – of it's being a film about films and a portmanteau horror movie. Well, I'll never get those two hours of my life back, but at least I can hold up a skeletal, warning hand to anyone thinking about taking a similar risk.

VHS is an anthology horror film, made up of five short films wrapped inside a sixth, framing story – just like *Dead of Night*, *Dr Terror's House of Horrors* and other fondly remembered, nostalgia-tinged favourites. It also has a distinctive and contemporary thematic hook: all of the films are based on the POV/found footage subgenre that's infested the horror landscape, with wildly mixed results, ever since *Blair Witch* burst on the scene 13 years ago.

Surely, this was the perfect opportunity not just to reflect (self-reflexively, of course) on this cultural trend and the technologies and identities driving it, but to offer a sort of summation and last word on the subject? What could possibly go wrong?

Well, nearly everything, as it turns out. Far from attempting any sort of deconstruction of this horror trope, *VHS* offers only a series of tired riffs on an already tired cinematic formula. Certainly, none of the films is strong enough to stand alone, but taken together they offer an enervating exercise in repetition and diminishing returns. The six fims are, in a way, both too samey to prevent a rapid pall of boredom descending and too divergent to offer any chance of the film ever adding up to a meaningful whole.

David Bruckner's 'Amateur Night' shows a bit of promise, as boorish blokes with a video find themselves in a male gaze vs vagina

dentate scenario that at least flags up the connections between emergent technologies and the pornographic imagination, but it's neither surprising nor scary. Ti West's 'Second Honeymoon', a road trip diary that exposes the fractures in a couple's relationship, has one genuinely creepy moment amongst the acres of padding, but outstays its welcome and goes nowhere, slowly. Glenn McQuaid's 'Tuesday the 17th' is, as its name suggests, a sort of mini-slasher movie, but so insubstantial and inept as to vanish into the Camp Crystal Lake of forgetting almost before it's over. Joe Swanberg's 'The Sick Thing That Happened to Emily When She Was Younger' is perhaps the best of the bunch, using video chat rather than POV shaky-cam as its formal anchor, building some genuine tension and introducing some unexpectedly fortean material into what initially seems like a just another *Paranormal Activity* knock-off; Radio Silence (four whole people, God help us!) turn in '10/31/98', one of the lamest and least plausible haunted house stories seen since the glory days of *Scooby Doo*.

Of course, what all good portmanteau movies have is a decent framing story – think of *Dead of Night*, *Asylum*, even *Creepshow* – to hold their disparate tales in place and, if possible, provide a suitably nerve-jangling twist with which to send viewers out into the night. *VHS*, to its utter shame, even manages to screw this up. Adam Wingard's 'Tape 56' – in which a gang of camera-wielding thugs are sent to break into an old dead guy's house to steal a certain VHS tape – opens the film and is interspersed between its segments, but merely fizzles out in a flaccid premature ejaculation before Radio Silence's effort ends the whole thing on a note of bathetic pointlessness that has no relationship with anything that has gone before.

Attempting to be charitable, one might suggest that a theme about voyeurism and the male gaze could at least be teased from one or two of the stories here, but anyone (yes, call me naive) hoping that *VHS* would offer a dark, Godardian meditation on the visual language of the sexting generation is in for a bitter disappointment: the POV æsthetics on display here

The Reverend's Review

FT's resident man of the cloth REVEREND PETER LAWS dons his dog collar and faces the flicks that Church forgot! (www.theflicksthatchurchforgot.com)

ZOMBIE FLESH EATERS

Dir Lucio Fulci, Italy 1979
Arrow Films, £22.99, £19.99

COMPANY OF WOLVES

Dir Neil Jordan, UK 1984
ITV DVD, £19.99

Despite *Zombie Flesh Eaters* being released as the unofficial sequel to Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*, it is, if anything, a prequel – a zombie genesis story in which an outbreak of a reanimating disease leaves the shores of a Caribbean Island to reach the ports of New York, infecting the USA. Yet apart from that, Lucio Fulci's muddy-faced epic is a world away from the tidy, clean Monroeville Mall of Romero's film. It lacks the depth and social commentary of *Dawn*, and the plot and characters feel far less satisfying. But does that really matter when the film has three aces up its sleeve? Namely Lucio Fulci, Fabio Frizzi and Gino De Rossi.

Director Fulci frames some superb images here. From a spooky empty yacht floating toward New York to the wide-angle shots of zombies shuffling down palm littered streets as a crab scuttles across the screen. If you've only seen this on a dodgy pan-and-scan VHS, then this widescreen HD print will be a revelation. Composer Frizzi's throbbing theme music is almost the default sound for Italian zombies. And then there's De Rossi, who ramps up the gore effects to such a level that the film wound up on the infamous Video Nasties list. Eyes are gouged, arms are chewed and a zombie's head is bashed in with a hefty crucifix. Disgusting perhaps, but it's done with a carnival glint in the eye and impressive technical skill. Then there are the ghouls themselves. Caked with mud, they don't just look dead, you can believe they stink of death too. I haven't even mentioned the zombie vs. shark scene, which somehow plays as fantastic rather than dumb. Arrow pack in two discs' worth of extras, including a frank and lengthy interview with star Ian Mculloch. He admits that he genuinely struggled to take Fulci seriously, because he looked so much like Benny Hill. Plenty of others haven't taken Fulci seriously for other reasons. Perhaps releases like this can help his critics think again.

The retro horror continues on Blu-Ray with *The Company of Wolves*. Neil Jordan's version of the Angela Carter story is perhaps the most unusual werewolf film ever made. Told through the twisted branches of a fairytale world, it's an exploration of puberty, sexual awakening and the danger lurking in men who are "hairy on the inside". The sets are deliberately theatrical, which only adds to the sense of creepy, fireside story-telling. The wonderful score by George Fenton, the brilliantly bizarre effects and the odd narrative structure make this feel less like a film than a dream that frequently turns some nightmarish corners. At times beautiful, at others frightening, Jordan's film deserves a more polished HD release than this. There's a commentary track, but the print is so-so. Other than the bonus DVD copy, this steelbook edition is identical to the previous ITV Blu-ray release.

Fortean Times Verdict

TWO VERY DIFFERENT HORROR CLASSICS GET HD TREATMENT **8**

probably derive more from a familiarity with Jackass and Bang Bros porn films than Laura Mulvey. The pathetic small-time crooks of Ward's story are told by their mysterious employer that finding the right tape is easy enough: "You'll know it when you see it."

Obviously, it wasn't any of the clunkers in this sorry compendium.
David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict
HOPEFULLY THIS TURKEY WILL BURY A CLAPPED-OUT GENRE **4**

Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same

Dir Madeleine Olnek, US 2011
Peccadillo Pictures, £14.99

Codependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same opens with a glamorous therapist trying to disabuse Jane, a New York stationery store worker, of the notion that aliens are attempting to contact her. As it happens, Jane was right.

Three have been sent from the planet Zots, somewhere near Saturn, because their "big feelings" are damaging the planet's ozone layer. They can return only when their hearts have been broken by Earthlings, rendering them environmentally safe. Soon Zoinx (deadpan, bald and socially inept) and Jane (sweet, bad hair and socially inept) attract the attention of two Men in Black, whose task is to disrupt interspecies romances. The men spend much of their time pondering what it means to be alien and/or lesbian ("Just because they're aliens doesn't mean they can't be dates") and the senior agent's choreographed and costumed Little Mermaid-themed wedding. Zylar, meanwhile, is like a kid in a sweetshop, hitting on Earth women indiscriminately. Fellow alien Barr is crushed: she wants only to be with Zylar. Eventually the Zotsian masters summon the women home, having worked out that love and the ozone layer were different problems. "No one I've had feelings for has ever returned them," Jane tells Zoinx. "I should have known you were from Outer Space." The gills were a clue too.

Co-Dependent Lesbian Space Alien Seeks Same is a screwball comedy made by someone who loves cheap-as-chips 1950s SF. The aliens' language is just run backwards, the costumes and effects are cheesy, the hand-held camera shakes as if the operator had palsy. Yet it's affecting, clever and very sweet. And it all ends happily ever after.
Val Stevenson

Fortean Times Verdict
A THOROUGHLY ENJOYABLE SPIN ON 1950S SF CHEEPNIS **7**

Lady Snowblood/Lady Snowblood 2: Love Song of Vengeance

Dir Toshiya Fujita, Japan, 1973/1974
Arrow Films, £29.99 (DVD/Blu-ray Dual Format)

This colourful art-exploitation double-bill features the Lady Snowblood films that heavily influenced Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* duology. Based on a manga, the films follow Yuki (Meiko Kaji), a woman raised for one purpose – to avenge her mother by killing those who raped her and condemned her to prison, where she died in childbirth. The original 1973 *Lady Snowblood* – lovingly restored in sharp HD on Blu-ray – is the Japanese, period-set equivalent of rape-revenge video nasty *I Spit on Your Grave*, with added Samurai sword-play. The back-story plays out in a combination of flashbacks with illustration and photomontages, deftly co-opting the comic-book source material. This method also serves to mythologise Yuki's quest and fighting prowess, a process built up further by a journalist (Kurosawa Toshio) who chronicles her bloody exploits. While exploitative, the movie is also an allegory for post-war Japan and the legacy left to those who grew up in the wake of the conflict.

The sequel pushes this further, as Yuki finds herself dealing with the corruption of politics, where sometimes murder is the only sane response. Switching the standard Samurai character with a female warrior was a great idea, and Jasper Sharp's documentary extra puts the films in the context of Japanese cinema and the movies *Lady Snowblood* has influenced.
Brian J Robb

Fortean Times Verdict
BLOODY, ANARCHIC AND GREAT-LOOKING PERIOD EXPLOITATION **8**

SHORTS

WEREWOLF: THE BEAST AMONG US

(Universal Pictures, £9.99/£12.99)

Tough one this; the fact that it's Universal's latest attempt to reboot the Werewolf franchise can only make one nostalgic for the Lon Chaney/Wolfman original all those years ago. That, simply, is the benchmark they've set for themselves. Although the opening spectacle of a family being massacred bodes well, it's pretty much downhill from there into one of those infuriating and currently all-too-common realms of Steampunk England, American frontier town and Mittel-European village where people speak English with Irish, Russian and Mexican accents, while the technology is distinctly mediaeval. The effects are decent enough, but a good cast (Stephen Rea, Nia Peeples), is wasted on a poor script, where the gang of disparate and desperate renegades – hot tattooed girl, English, gothic-type weaponry expert – are given no back-story whatsoever. This feels more like a poor graphic novel and does something of a disservice to the Universal Werewolf legacy. **Tim Weinberg** 5/10

ROSEWOOD LANE

(Studiocanal, £12.99)

A radio show psychologist (Rose McGowan) makes her own Freudian slip and decides to exorcise her demons by moving into her dead, abusive father's big old house in the burbs. Bad idea – there's a demonic paper-boy on the loose! And he has our heroine in his sights. After having sat through the film, I still have no idea why. Or why, having settled on such an off-the-wall story idea, Victor Salva (*Jeepers Creepers*) insists on delivering it in such a clunking, literal-minded fashion, telegraphing the scares way ahead of time and relying on every cliché in the book to do so. On top of that, we get two of the dumbest cops ever and a stubborn refusal to understand how cats and catflaps work. Initially intriguing, and watchable enough, but this ends up being pretty unsatisfying on every level. **DS** 4/10

DARK NATURE

(Matchbox Films, £15.99)

Another strange one. A nice old lady is bumped off with her own typewriter in the pre-credits sequence, only for her killer to be despatched moments later with a large knife. The film proper begins with an irritating family (pushy mom, wimpy new boyfriend, obnoxious teen girl, annoying little boy) turning up at the big house and finding that Grandma is missing. Theres a mad entomologist on the loose, a blind tarot reader and an obviously psycho gamekeeper, usually seen gutting fish in a deeply sinister fashion. Whodunnit? Who done what? To who? And why? It's a deliberately oblique and allusive little film, with echoes throughout of key works on the more interesting periphery of mainstream horror: Roeg's *Don't Look Now*, Colin Eggleston's *Long Weekend*, Peckinpah's *Straw Dogs* and, crucially, Bava's *Bay of Blood*. There's also a hint of Italinate *giallo* style at times, but much of the time this is a film about landscape – an unspoiled Scottish tidal estuary, beautifully shot – and sound, in which the relentless ebb and flow of the waters and the cries of oystercatchers contribute a good deal of atmosphere. Marc de Launay's film, while flawed at times by some underwhelming performances, is a refreshingly poetic nightmare, with a dark undertow of ecological apocalypse. **DS** 7/10

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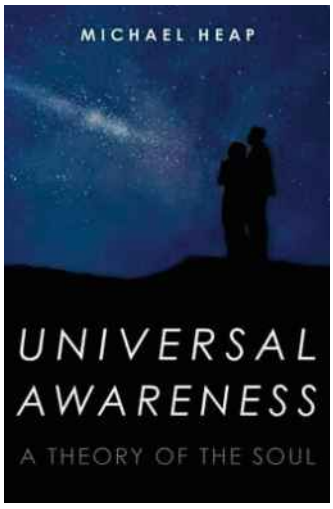

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About the author:
Michael Heap is a clinical and forensic psychologist, an internationally recognised authority on hypnosis, and a prolific writer and speaker on skepticism. His website is http://www.mheap.com/

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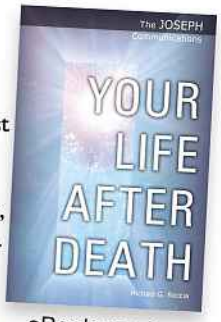

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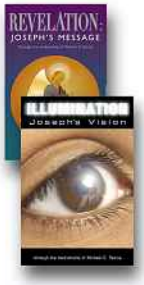

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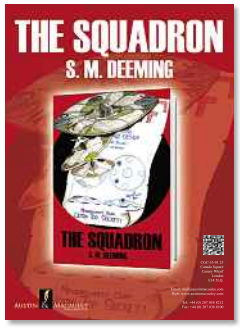

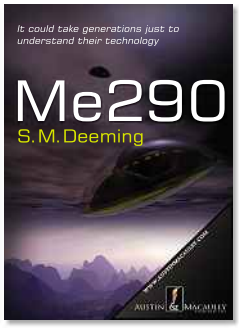

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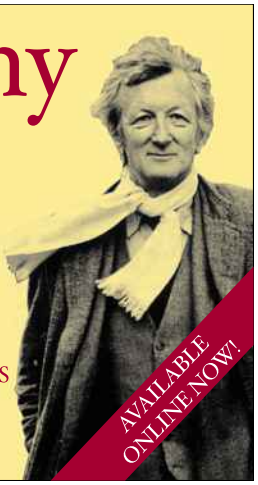

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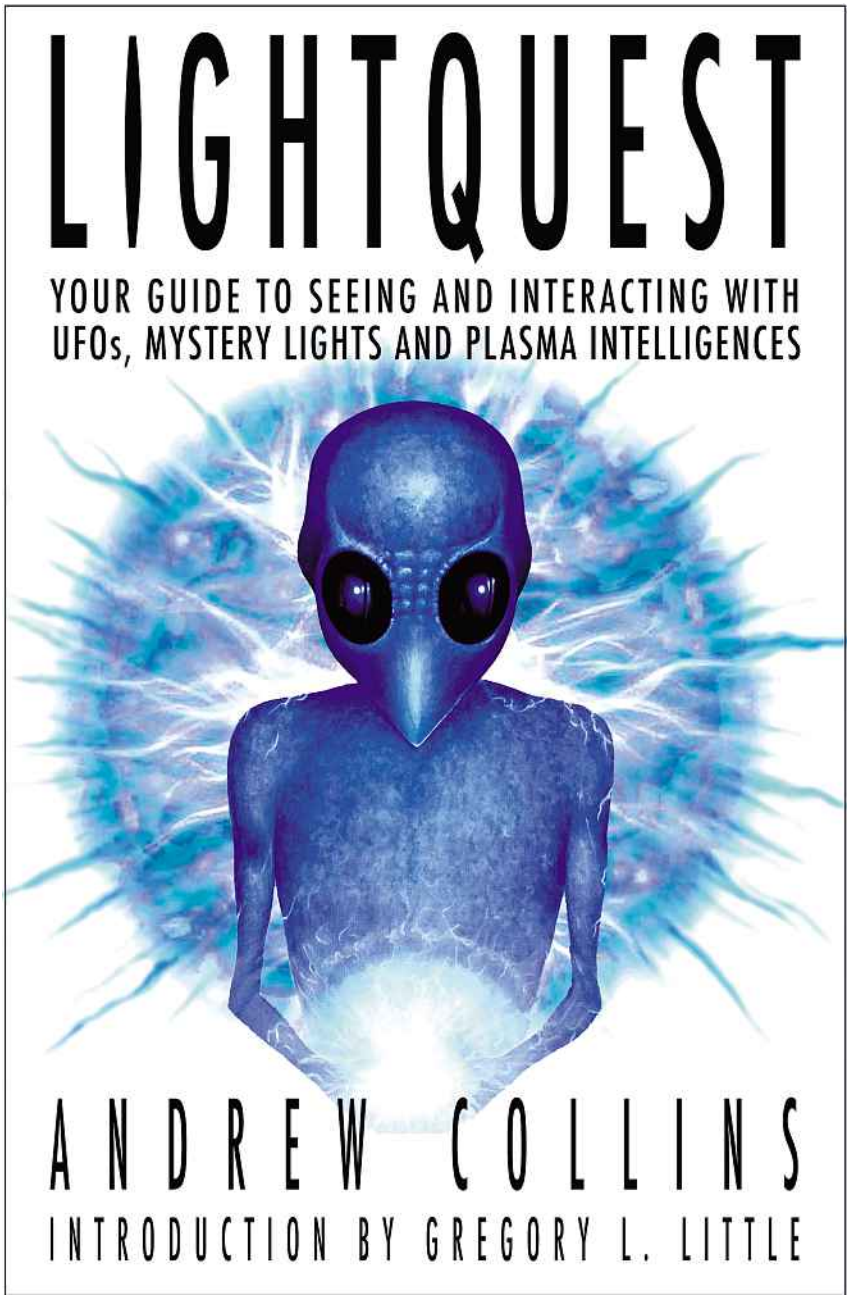
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ANDREW COLLINS
INTRODUCTION BY GREGORY L. LITTLE

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Dear FT...

letters

Piltdown Cranium

I was interested to read in your obituary of Phillip Tobias [**FT295:26**] a mention of the Piltdown Man hoax of 1912 and its exposure as the lower jaw of an orang-utan "and a modern *Homo sapiens* cranium". During the late 1990s, the cranium was X-rayed at the Natural History Museum in London. This revealed abnormal (pathological) expansion of the diploe, of the kind seen in extra-axial red blood cell (marrow) activity, such as occurs in severe anæmias. It is typical of conditions such as sickle-cell anæmia and thalassæmia, although this fact would have been relatively obscure in 1912.

This discovery should have pointed to the complicity in the hoax of (Sir) Arthur Keith, a "suspect" who has been named previously. He was an anthropologist and Conservator of the Hunterian Museum at the Royal College of Surgeons in London. This would give him unique access to both primate material from the Far East and pathological specimens. The key discovery was announced in newspapers on 18 December 1912. To hammer home the joke that the "Missing Link" was an Englishman, a fossilised "cricket bat" turned up in the excavation a short while later. It is astonishing that the scientific establishment took 40 years, and the advent of fluoride dating, to realise that the whole affair was a rather crude hoax.

Nick Warren
Pinner, Middlesex

Editor's note: for more on the Piltdown hoax, see FT62:24-30.

Steampunk origins

Brian J Robb's article 'Back To The Future' [**FT295:32-38**] was an enjoyable overview of a patchy genre. When done well, Steampunk can be superb, and I would say Michael Moorcock's 'Dancers at the End of Time' cycle is far and away the best thing ever written to which the label can be applied. Of course, there is a sadly vast amount of material out there, best avoided, which uses cod-Victorian narrative style to try and cover for an inability to write prose. Anyway, I was glad to see Dr Who name-checked in the article, but believe that the show did more than just 'get in on the act'. Once Williams Hartnell's Doctor stopped being such a bastard, there were elements of a Wellsian adventurer present in the central character from very early on in the show's run. In particular, I'd highlight Phillip Sandifer's assertion that Dr Who invented the Steampunk genre, from his TARDIS Eruditorum blog article on the Patrick Troughton story 'Evil of the Daleks':

"[A]n alchemical time machine has apparently summoned the Daleks. Which, aside from being a bewildering juxtaposition, also means that Doctor Who quietly invented Steampunk – in 1967... If you take as a fair definition of Steampunk – 'a sub genre of science fiction concerned with juxtaposing the structure and imagery of Victorian adventure stories from which science fiction developed with concepts from contemporary science fiction'... Then 'Evil of the Daleks' is Steampunk through and through, ages before it was cool, or, for that matter existent."

Also, Robb mentions the 1977 story 'The Talons of Weng-Chiang', which features Tom Baker in Holmes-influenced garb and a cameo from the Giant Rat of Sumatra, one of Holmes's most famous 'missing adventures' referred to in 'The Sussex Vampire'. This, alongside other work, gives author Robert Holmes, in my opinion, a fair claim as the originator of The Wold Newtonesque Steampunky furrow that authors such as Alan Moore and Kim Newman now plough.

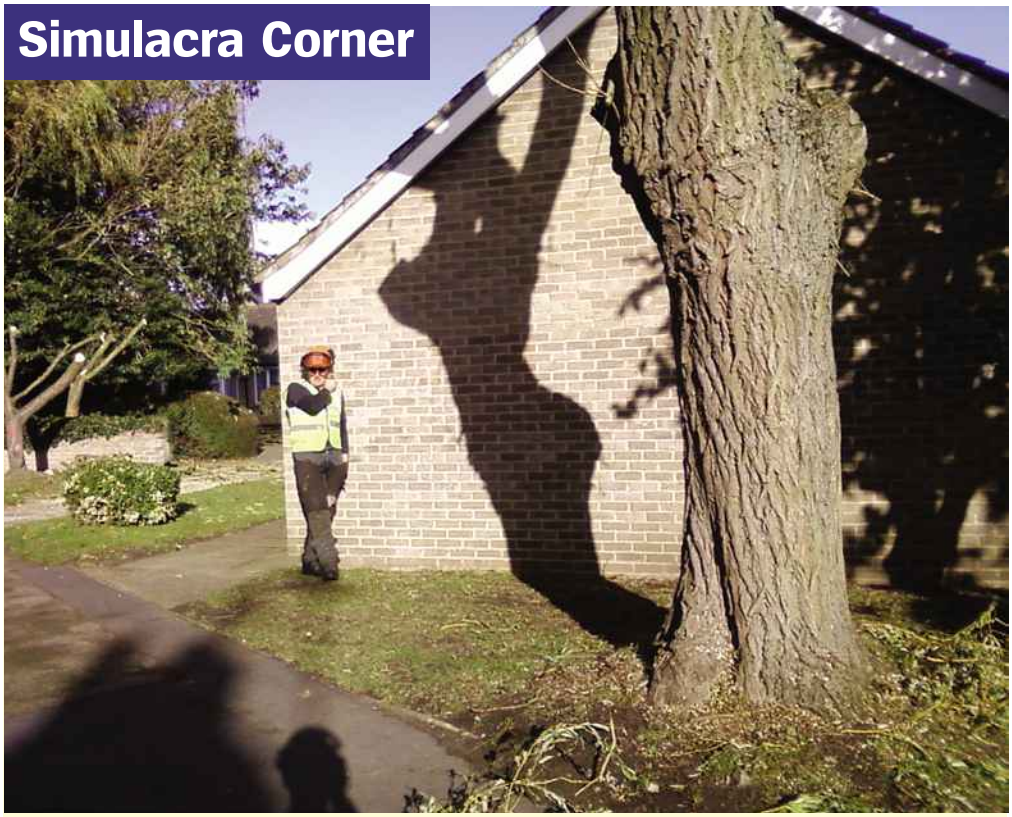
Greg Maughan
Woodford, Essex

Scottish big game?

Re the feature on big cat sightings on Scottish islands [**FT295:56-57**], I have a possible explanation: illegal big game hunting. I am sure I saw an article about two lynx that had been seized by the RSPCA that were on their way to Scotland to be hunted. Like the elusive Thunderbird Picture, I cannot for the life of me remember where I saw it. Can anyone shed any light?

Claire —
By email

Simulacra Corner



A part-time tree surgeon was pollarding this tree when a passer-by pointed out the shadow it was making on the garage wall, so he took this photograph. It was sent to *FT* by his work colleague, Ant Walker.

*We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures. Send them to the PO box above (with a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon) or to sieveking@forteantimes.com – please tell us your postal address and we'll send you an exclusive **FT** gift.*

letters

Lenin augmented

I was going through some photographs taken in Sofia, Bulgaria, recently and noticed this statue of Lenin had a communist star made of snow embossed on his face. Spooky!
Richard Bond, *By email*

Ghostly hoax

Regarding the ghost baby [Sidelines **FT295:12**]: someone claiming to be John Gore's son comments on 'This is Gloucestershire' website: "I'm John Gore's son. I only took the picture to frighten some of my family, but if I had known my father was going to pass it to the [Gloucester] *Echo* then I would have owned up, so I apologise if it offended anyone."
Jason Feather
By email

Merman portrait

Back in the early 1980s, I was wandering around the back streets of Manila in the Philippines when I came across a photograph displayed in the window of a small shop. It showed two fishermen either side of a creature that appeared to be half man and half fish. It had a humanoid face, small arms, and the rest was fish-like. The photograph was labelled "Arabian Sea" 1930-something and looked genuine.
A Nicholas
Bangkok, Thailand

Three knocks

I was very interested to read about Maria Nina's strange experiences involving three knocks [**FT285:71**]. I was brought up in Belfast, but didn't know about the "three knocks" tradition. When my wife and I first got together 20 years ago, we lived in her terraced house in east Lancashire. One evening while lying in bed (we worked shifts at the time) we also heard three strange inexplicable knocks on the wall dividing us from our neighbour. A short pause, then three knocks again, sometimes for half an hour or more. Two teenage boys lived next door with their parents, and the knocking noise, three knocks followed by a pause, happened on many, many early evenings. We never investigated any further after concluding that one of the sons had been bought a dartboard, and had hung it from the adjoining wall for practice. Had I been a *Fortean Times* reader in those days, I might have considered different explanations.
Bob Denmark
Garstang, Lancashire

Midwest anomaly

While visiting my hometown of Winchester, Kentucky, back in the Seventies, I was watching TV news at my cousin's house when we saw a news story about a family in nearby Lexington waking up to find a wrecking ball in their front yard. My cousin and I had a good laugh over this.

Recently, while reading Albert Jack's *Loch Ness Monsters and Raining Frogs: The World's Most Puzzling Mysteries Solved* I came across a story in the chapter 'The World's Strangest Unsolved Crimes'. A three-ton steel demolition ball belonging to the Dowling Construction Company was discovered missing one morning in 1974 from a construction site in Indianapolis. The workers employed by the construction firm had securely locked the site the night before, leaving the steel ball dangling from a crane more than 200ft (60m) above the ground. After reading this story I realised the year I saw the news story at my cousin's house was 1974 because I had just graduated from high school and was preparing to enter my first semester at college.

Now, for a three-ton steel demolition ball to go missing from a height of 200ft in Indianapolis and for a family in Lexington to find a wrecking ball in their yard – a distance of nearly 200 miles (320km) – sounds eminently fortean. Jumping on the Internet, I found plenty about the missing ball from Indianapolis but nothing about the news story my cousin and I saw on TV. The only thing I learned from Google was pertaining to Bruce Springsteen's "Wrecking Ball" Tour.
Greg May
Orlando, Florida

Strange empathy

I read Sophie Collard's article about "death tourism" [**FT294:56-57**] with great interest because a friend of mine is one of the guides at Sachsenhausen "Oranienburg" concentration camp. His job is to meet visitors from the local railway station, chaperone them through the town and on to the camp, answering questions relating to the history of the camp and so forth. Nonetheless, what should be a relatively straightforward job is complicated by the behaviour of some of the tourists. This calls into question the reasons why some people want to visit these sites.

Among the questions he is asked will usually be one of the following: How many people died there? How many gas chambers are there, and where are they? Are there any ghosts? And – perhaps the most macabre – Do you do any reconstructions? Furthermore, some tourists insist on walking through the town with their hands behind their heads (as if they were prisoners), much to the embarrassment of my friend. Once inside the gas chamber (Sachsenhausen was primarily a forced labour camp, and only has one gas chamber), some of the tourists will adopt a stress position, such as squatting against the wall, hands behind their heads, with nothing beneath them to use as a support.

What provokes some to feel the need to pretend they are prisoners, about to face death in such a terrible way, especially when they can have no conception of what the reality was actually like? Sophie Collard argues that "many tourists don't want to go without giving something back. They believe that just by standing in the places where such atrocities happened they help demonstrate that what did happen is not acceptable." However, for some of these tourists it is not enough just to be there. Perhaps they believe that something so horrifying deserves a more overt display of empathy,

as if just being at the site is not enough, and that they have to put themselves in the position of concentration camp prisoners in order to try and understand what happened. Are these self-imposed re-enactments merely gestures to satisfy a sense of guilt, or do they offer a genuine attempt at showing understanding and sympathy with what happened? I would be interested to hear other possible explanations or comments.

Michael Ahmed
Barnet, Hertfordshire

Not just Christians

Did you know that there are entire websites for non-Judæo-Christian images of near-death experiences? Native American folklore is full of accounts that today would be considered NDEs. Jesus appears in none of them. I'm amazed that there are actually people (I've met some of them) who think that non-Christians don't have NDEs because they get no press.

I've never understood why people who claim to have left their bodies always describe "looking down" at themselves. If your vision isn't restricted by the physiology of the eye, shouldn't you be seeing in all directions at once?

Hal C Pattee
Utica, New York

Catholics have visions of the Virgin Mary, but what do people of other religions and cultures experience, apart from ETs? For instance, do Isis-worshippers have visions of Isis? (Yes, as it happens.) Do Scandinavian death-metallers have visions of Freya/Frigga? Were the visions of the BVM at Medjugorje really visions of the Slavonic fertility goddess Perchta, the Bride of the Sun?

Are the sightings of the *Flying Dutchman* nothing more than misidentifications of icebergs that have somehow (perhaps because of the immense size of the original 'bergs) survived the journey from the Antarctic? Would enduring Arctic icebergs account for stories of phantom ships in northern waters – which predate the *Flying Dutchman* because there are more people near the Arctic than the Antarctic, and for longer?

Bobby Zodiac
Shipston-on-Stour, Warwickshire

Vanishing ghosts

Ever since I was a small boy in the 1970s, I have been fascinated by – yet at the same time a bit scared of – the old dark house that we lived in, or the dark room at my aunt's on a sleep-over. I was always thinking that a ghost would appear from the wall, or the door that used to be there; always holding my breath, listening, afraid of the slightest nocturnal noise. It was to me magical (with the bed covers hiding the door), the unknown, the unexpected. What if I photographed a real ghost, like the ones in my books?

But things are different now: orbs are all dust specs, vortex swirls are camera straps, any apparition caught on camera is a fake, any ghosts caught on film are debunked. Technology has caught up. Anyone with time on their hands can create an apparition. We will never again be able to go back to those pictures of the unknown, like me as a boy, when a spook photo was, to me at least, very real. Ghosts are all in the past.

Darren Green
Wirral

Editor's note: It's not really as cut and dried as that. True, the advent of digital photo manipulation in the last 20 years or so has ended the role of photographs as solid evidence for anything at all (without witness corroboration) – but, as ever, people continue to experience ghosts, whatever they might be.

British Israelites

I'm surprised at Ted Harrison's throwaway description of British Israelism as "a curious – and now unfashionable – idea which once fascinated Victorian Society", in his discussion of Michael Goldsworthy's beliefs [Devon's Mystery Island, **FT293:56**].

Curious it may be, and certainly there is little or no genuine historical evidence for it. But to dismiss it with the words "In many ways, it was a British version of Mormonism that failed to take root" completely misses its significance, both historically and today. British Israelism can actually be traced back as far as the late 16th century. In 1723 a Dutch scholar, Dr Jacques Abbadie, wrote: "Unless the ten tribes have flown into the air or have been plunged into the centre of the earth, they must be sought for in the north and the west, and in the British Isles". It really took shape in the mid-19th century with John Wilson's *Lectures on Our Israelitish Origins* (1840), and Ted Harrison is right that it was popular in Victorian times, but it was at its height in Britain in the early decades of the 20th century. The British Israel World Federation (BIWF) was formed in 1922; in 1929 it filled London's Royal Albert Hall and in 1931 over 20,000 people attended its week-long annual congress. The BIWF had support from parliamentarians of both Houses, some senior members of the armed forces and a number of clergy; its most senior patron was Princess Alice of Athlone (1883–1981), a granddaughter of Queen Victoria.

British Israelite beliefs were also at the heart of the prophetic teachings of the Worldwide Church of God, founded by American preacher Herbert W Armstrong in the 1930s. Armstrong's teachings were borrowed wholesale from *Judah's Sceptre and Joseph's Birthright*, first published in 1902 by an American Methodist minister, JH Allen. Armstrong taught in his own book *The United States and Britain in Prophecy* that the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel settled in Britain, and specifically that any biblical prophecies about the sub-tribes of Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh are about Britain and the USA respectively. At its height, the Worldwide Church of God had 100,000 baptised members, and its flagship magazine, *The Plain Truth*, which championed British Israelism, had a circulation of over six million worldwide.

When, in the decade following Armstrong's death in 1986, his successor dropped these and other heterodox beliefs, hundreds of ministers and tens of thousands of members left the Worldwide Church of God to found three main schismatic Churches holding to Armstrong's original beliefs, including British Israelism. These three Churches have since splintered into over 400 different Churches, all bringing their firm belief in British Israelism into the 21st century – as I discuss in detail in my book *The Fragmentation of a Sect* (Oxford University Press, December 2012).

Dr David V Barrett
London

It could be you!

Further to Louie Gabia's protestation about my letter on probability ('Lightning odds' **FT 294:71**), he's right to challenge my original statement. Taking his comments into account, I amend it thus: "You're 23 times more likely to be struck by lightning than you are to win the lottery, if you only buy one ticket over a period of 671 days". (23 x 1,117,318/13,983,816 x 365 days = 670.8 days).

If a single lottery ticket is bought over a lifetime (say, 80 years), then one is over a thousand times more likely to be struck than one is to win (13,983,816 x 80/1,117,318 = 1001). If one *never* buys a ticket, then one is *infinitely more likely* to be struck by lightning than one is to win the lottery – but no matter how many tickets you buy, you'll never be infinitely more likely to win the lottery than get struck by lightning.

"Keep playing and paying, your time will come", he informs us. How long might one have to play (and pay) for? Well, assuming one buys a single ticket for every draw and there are 104 draws per year, then on average one would have to wait 13,983,816/104 = 134,460 years before winning. Good luck – do let us all know when you hit the jackpot.

James Dixon
Fallowfield, Manchester

PETER KING

"Apparently, I'm to get him 'slippers'. He looks to be about a 9."

it happened to me...

First-hand accounts from *FT* readers and browsers of www.forteantimes.com

Spooky toy megaphone

We lived for 20-plus years in a house in suburban Melbourne. It was built in the mid 1950s and had several families live there before us. There was always a peculiar vibe about the place; initially we put it down to the previous occupants. We'd met them once when we'd looked at the place while searching for a home to buy; after that we always privately called them the Addams Family. When they'd moved out and before we moved in, we had to give the place a major clean. The previous owners had left the house in a filthy state – one bedroom in particular had streaks of blood across the walls.

As soon as we moved in, odd things would happen: small objects such as jewellery and keys would go missing, only to reappear sometime later in strange places, for example between the sheets at the foot of a bed, or between dinner plates in a cupboard. Occasionally my wife and kids would glimpse a little blonde-haired girl in different rooms and my wife would regularly feel someone stroke her hair as she lay in bed at night when there was no one actually there. These and other things that happened never made us uneasy; we thought of the presence as just part of the house. Although this story isn't really about the occurrences in the house, I think that somehow the vibe of the place played a part in it.

Our youngest son had been given a voice-changing megaphone toy as a present at my office Christmas party. It had three or four voice settings; one of the voices that could be chosen to alter the speaker's was that of a child. Initially the toy worked as it said on the box; but one day as I played with the kids an odd thing happened. As I spoke into the megaphone, my words were altered; not just my voice, but the words themselves. The sentence still made sense, but it plainly wasn't what I'd said. In addition, the 'child' voice had taken on a weird impish quality, taunting and sneering at the same time. The first time it happened I thought that maybe it was because I'd misheard the voice from the megaphone, or maybe the batteries were going flat and altering the sound being reproduced in some strange way.

I replaced the batteries and tried again. The voice was stranger when I tried it again, but only when the 'child' voice was selected. Each time something was said, more words would be changed, the 'child' voice becoming creepier and more demonic. I clearly recall my statement "I'm going to tickle you" being reproduced in the 'child' voice as "I'm going to suffocate you". I took the batteries out of the thing and put it well out of reach of the kids.

Sometime later, my brother-in-law and I were swapping spooky stories and I thought of the weird toy. He didn't believe what I told him, so I got down the megaphone from its hiding place and had him try it out for himself.

The first few things he said were reproduced in the 'child' voice just as he'd spoken them. Then the impish demon voice was back twisting his words as it'd done to mine. But, not only did the words change, a horrible devilish giggle that made our skin crawl came from the megaphone. My brother-in-law looked at me with horror and dropped the megaphone as if it had sprung to life and had tried to bite him.

After that I took the batteries out of the thing again and put it up out of reach on top of a high wardrobe. I didn't think about it for years and when we moved out, the megaphone wasn't one of the 'lost' things that always turn up when you move house.

I don't know what happened to it; my wife and kids don't know where it went either. I'd love to have it here now, in our new home. I'd love to try it again and see if the creepy little voice was just another aspect of the presence in the old house. It still gives me the creeps when I think about it, in particular that horrible little giggle that came from the thing the last time anyone touched it. Of the many peculiar things that we witnessed in that house and in another we lived in for a short time, the megaphone was the only one that seemed sinister. The rest of the experiences appeared to be benign, even playful at times. The 'child' voice from the megaphone was neither benign nor playful.

Gary Smith
Victoria, Australia

> "The stillness in the cemetery was palpable and I began to feel slightly uncomfortable"

SARAH EAST

Warning from the dead

Whilst on a recent visit to my parents who live in Cyprus, I was taken into the stunning Troodos mountains to see the village of Omados, a picturesque place which in the summer months is overrun by tourists – but in the Spring, at the time of my visit, is relatively quiet. After lunch my parents and I walked to the outskirts of the village and came upon a small but impressive cemetery surrounded by a brick wall and railings. It was immaculate and incredibly peaceful. My mother stopped and refused to go any further. She retreated some 100 yards or so, citing the fact that this was an EOKA cemetery and that it didn't seem right for us as British citizens to be anywhere near it. The EOKA, my father explained, fought a guerrilla war against British occupying troops in the 1950s. Many young Cypriots were shot during this period of turmoil and were hailed as martyrs by EOKA supporters.

While my father continued to explain the background to the conflict, I marvelled at the simple beauty of the tombstones decorated with the memorial ceramics so beloved of this part of the world. Young men shot by British forces stared back at me, fresh commemorative ribbons draped around their headstones. The stillness was palpable, and I began to feel slightly uncomfortable. I turned to my father and said: "I bet they aren't too pleased that we're standing

outside their cemetery!" At that precise moment a heavy metallic ice cream sign standing about six feet away from us rattled furiously as if in response. Bearing in mind there had been no breeze whatsoever, my father and I exchanged a look that needed no words and quickly joined my mother further down the road. I vowed there and then to show more sensitivity if I ever came across such graves again.

Vicky Holt
Whitefield, Manchester

Big Cat prints

Towards the end of March 2000, I was seconded to a team doing a leakage survey for a well-known utility company. Some of our survey routes were in particularly remote locations, such as farmland and backwater tracks in the depths of the south Midland countryside. One such route was several miles down a rough road cutting through farmland to a compressor station that required some maintenance. I stopped, allowing my colleague to get out and unlock the gate before driving into the compound and parking.

I found him looking slightly concerned and enquired what was wrong. "There's something in here with us!" he said. My first impulse was to run back to the van, but I was comforted by the knowledge that the snow-covered fields, which extended in all directions as far as the eye could see, would reveal any intruder. The only blind side was an area behind the large brick-built compressor house, so we walked round it to investigate. There was a line of animal footprints in the fresh snow that extended from behind the building and stopped just short of the 10ft (3m) perimeter fence that circled the compound. Closer inspection showed that whatever had made the tracks had entered the compound via a large hole under one of the steel fence panels. The prints were far larger than the palm of a man's hand, nearly twice the width, and quite obviously those of a cat – albeit a very large one. We beat a hasty retreat to the van and locked the doors. We waited for nearly an hour but saw nothing, and eventually we left. Although we never saw any actual 'beast', there was certainly an air of having only just missed it. We never reported the incident, mostly because we knew what response we'd get. I never mentioned it to anyone at work, and I don't think my colleague did either. He retired soon afterwards.

More than 10 years later I overheard two colleagues talking about a site visit to the same location. There was no snow on the ground, but just like us they'd found a set of prints, but this time they were cast in mud near the trackside of the gate. Whether the animal had entered the compound was impossible to determine, as most of the interior of the site was covered in pea-gravel and tarmac. The footprints unnerved them both so much that they never even ventured past the gate – though I don't know whether they gave this discovery as a reason for abandoning their task. Whatever they saw certainly sounds like what we had seen a decade earlier, although I didn't feel comfortable enough to ask them and admit I'd listened to their private conversation.

Simon M Deeming
By email

The empty glass

Re 'Tourists in Paradise' [**FT291:40-44**]: As a child of about 11 in the very early 1950s, I was taken ill with osteomyelitis, a blood clot attached to my heel. I was at a very remote prep school in an old house in Devonshire. The doctor said that I could not be moved to hospital for fear that the clot could dislodge and block an artery, so I was kept immobile in the school sanatorium under the eye of the Irish matron and her assistant nurse.

One night I woke up wanting to drink, but the glass by my bed was empty. I called out for the nurse, who came in, refilled the glass, and left. I am very short-sighted, so all I saw was a white robed figure backlit by the light in the corridor beyond. I reached for the glass. It was empty. I called again, and the same figure came in and refilled the glass. I found it empty again. This happened three times. I would have sworn I was awake throughout.

> "I am very short-sighted, so all I saw was a robed figure backlit by the light in the corridor beyond"

The next morning, the Matron came in, clearly upset. She told me that, during the night, I had been calling for a priest, and they had feared they were losing me (a possibility, as it happens). This was no vision of Heaven, and had disturbed me at the time. I assume now that in my illness I was hallucinating, but the white figure coming to help me certainly suggests the visions of Heaven in Ted Harrison's article, although she was in fact fairly useless. The mind can create wonderful (and confusing) phenomena, but they need to be viewed with caution.

Christopher Hobbs
By email

Pellet Mystery

I was struck by your report of yellow pellets falling on a lawn in Leicester last August [**FT294:9**] as, over the last few weeks [up to 15 October 2012], I have noticed small yellow pellets on the ground in my back yard. I have been picking them up and throwing them away as I did not want the dog to eat them. I have cleared up about a mugful in total. I assumed that someone was going a little mad with a BB gun, but they would have to have fired over my wall, and down into the yard. The back wall is about 10ft (3m) high and the yard completely enclosed by house walls on the other sides, so I was a little puzzled and a bit concerned.

However, on reading your report I thought that my pellets looked the same, so I went out and found a few to photograph (above). Some are broken; they appear to be made of hard plastic. The coin is for scale and is the size of a 10p. My husband has also seen the same type of pellets on the ground near our local shop, which is about a quarter of a mile (400m) away. I have yet to look in the front garden. I now wonder if they came down with the heavy rain we have had recently. I can't say I saw any fall, as I tended to be inside chasing around after leaks when we had the big downpours. We live on the coast – perhaps they have been floating in the sea and been picked up by some kind of weather system?

Karen Griffiths
North Shields, Tyne & Wear

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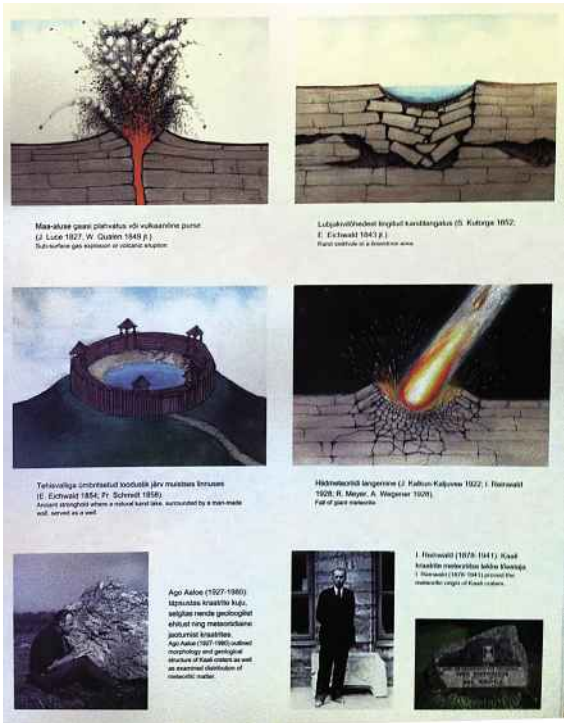
FORTEAN TRAVELLER

82. The Kaali Meteor Crater, Saaremaa Island, Estonia

KEITH RUFFLES travels by coach, ferry and bicycle to the island of Saaremaa in search of a meteoric impact crater with a rich heritage of legends

The Estonian island of Saaremaa is without doubt one of the most beautiful parts of this northern Baltic country. Cloaked with sweet-smelling pine forests and studded with grassy meadows and rich farmland, its more than 1,000 sq miles [2,590km^2] is home to less than 40,000 people. For Estonians and foreigners alike this truly is an enchanted place. It's probably not surprising, then, that the island is also the source of a rich variety of myths and legends stretching back into antiquity. Many places are associated with tales of heroic deeds and epic adventures, with hills, lakes and other landforms playing a prominent role. None, however, are more mysterious than the Kaali Meteor Crater.

It's a four-hour coach journey from Tallinn to the island's capital Kuressaare, a quick ferry crossing the short distance from the mainland. It's a pretty place – the town boasts the impressive mediæval Bishop's Castle, a fortress that wouldn't look out of place in a fairy tale – but I'm not here to sightsee. Instead, I dump my bag at a local youth hostel and pick up a rented bicycle; this will be my transport for the day.



Kaali is little more than a hamlet, and it takes me just over an hour to pedal the dozen miles or so through a mixture of farmland and meadows. There's a village store, a small post office and a scattering of houses and farm buildings. And there, incongruously tucked next to a school building, is the crater.

A perfectly round hole in the ground, it measures over 300ft (90m) in diameter and is over 60ft (18m) deep. In the centre lies a still green lake with barely a ripple disturbing the surface. Surrounded by a steep embankment covered with shrubs and trees, it's unusual in that it's fed and maintained almost entirely by rainwater. On a crisp summer morning like today it's a serenely impressive sight, but during times of drought it's often little more than a puddle.

The force that created such a hole was impressive. It's believed that the meteor responsible hit the Earth at some 5-10 miles (8-16km) per second, punching its way into the ground with a force equivalent to an atomic bomb.[1] Eight other smaller craters pepper the area – formed as the original meteor broke up in the Earth's atmosphere – but it's the main crater that takes centre stage.

What makes Kaali particularly special is that at a mere 4,000 years old it's thought to be one of the few impact craters in the world to be created in the recent past, and the only one to have taken place in a populated area.

At the time of the impact, Saaremaa was entering the Nordic Bronze Age. People were starting to form small settlements and communities, and numerous rock art sites across Scandinavia attest to a period of innovation and expansion. Ongoing contact between different groups led to an ever-increasing exchange of cultural ideas and new technologies;

ALL PHOTOS: KEITH RUFFLES

TOP: A display explains the discovery that the Kaali Crater was of meteoric, not volcanic, origin. **ABOVE LEFT:** The way to the crater. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Saaremaa forest.

ALL PHOTOS: KEITH RUFFLES

LEFT AND BELOW: Two views of the crater, surrounded by the trees of the Saaremaa forest. **ABOVE:** The Kaali Visitors' Centre, which features a display on the crater.

in particular a rich collection of myths and legends began to develop, with epic tales of heroic battles between the gods featuring prominently both in regional mythology and further afield.

It's thought that Kaali features prominently in some of these stories. In nearby Finland – there are strong cultural and linguistic links between Finns and Estonians – the *Kalevala* epic tells the story of Louhi, a mighty witch-queen capable of changing shape and casting powerful spells.

One day, Louhi steals the Sun and fire from mankind, plunging the world into total darkness. Ukko, the god of the sky, orders a new Sun to be made from a spark. Ilmatar, the Virgin of the Air, begins to make a new Sun but the spark drops from the sky and hits the ground, creating a new lake in its wake.

"The Sun with a long tail flew with deafening noise over the sky, wood was cut down, trees were set afire and the fortress destroyed. The bright flame of the explosion shook the shores of the Baltic Sea and it was even noticed in faraway countries... Then it was as quiet as a grave, pitch-dark and only a shimmer from burning forests could be seen. The Sun had fallen down and perished. We couldn't explain it in any other way. But the next day the Sun was in the sky again..." [2]

But all is not lost. Finnish adventurers witness the ball of fire falling somewhere *"behind the Neva river"* – the direction of Estonia from Finnish Karelia – and after journeying in that direction they are finally able to gather flames from a forest fire.

Another story has it that Saaremaa is the legendary island of Thule. First mentioned by ancient Greek geographer Pytheas, the theory is that Thule is derived from the Finnic word *tule* ("of fire") and thus ultimately from the folklore of *Kalevala*. Similarly, the Ancient Greek myth of Phaëton tells

One story says that Saaremaa is really the island of Thule

of the son of Helios who lost control of his Chariot of the Sun, scorching the Earth before being struck down by a thunderbolt hurled by Zeus. The meteor strike is also thought to inspire parts of the *Edda*, a prominent collection of mediæval Icelandic poems. Notably, Kaali was considered the place where *"the Sun went to rest"*. [3]

Archæology certainly seems to back up the claim that Kaali enjoyed some sort of sacred status at the time. Thought to have been surrounded by an Iron Age wall almost 500m (1640ft) in length, the site has yielded up a large number of domestic animal bones found in or around the lake, dating from prehistoric times right through to the 17th century. It's believed that these sacrifices were offerings to ensure good harvests and that these continued to be made in secret long after the church forbade such Pagan practices. [4] Silver ornaments dating from the first few centuries AD have also been discovered at the site.

Nearby is the Kaali Visitors' Centre, a smart modern building housing a small museum. [5] The receptionist looks genuinely surprised to see a visitor and jumps into action, racing around the few rooms switching on lights. The displays are mostly dedicated to the geology of the Estonian islands, but there is a section on the history of the crater, including the moment in 1937 when researchers realised it was created by a meteor and not by volcanic activity. It's a display with its scientific hat on; little attention is paid to the myths associated with the crater.

As I cycle back to Kuressaare I try to imagine the *"Falling of heavenly fire, explosions, clouds of dust and smoke... the landscape changed beyond recognition... fright and horror and awe among the surviving inhabitants."* [6] It's likely that such a cataclysmic event left a lasting impression upon the people of the island and that stories of the Sun falling from the sky spread to other cultures as trade and warfare increased. The most tangible legacy of the Kaali meteor is perhaps not found in the crater that bears its name, but in the stories and legends that find their origins in this most idyllic of places. FT

1. www.saaremaa.ee/
2. Lennart Meri, Hõbevalge, 1976.
3. Lennart Meri, Hõbevalgem, 1984
4. bit.ly/MtglPB (www.saaremaa.ee)
5. www.kaali.kylastuskeskus.ee
6. http://muinas.struktuur.ee/projektid/ecp/kaali/en/

KEITH RUFFLES is a 9-to-5 office monkey who dreams of a life travelling the world and writing about it in the process. He currently resides in the city of Leeds.

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Why Fortean?

Fortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

FT toes no party line.

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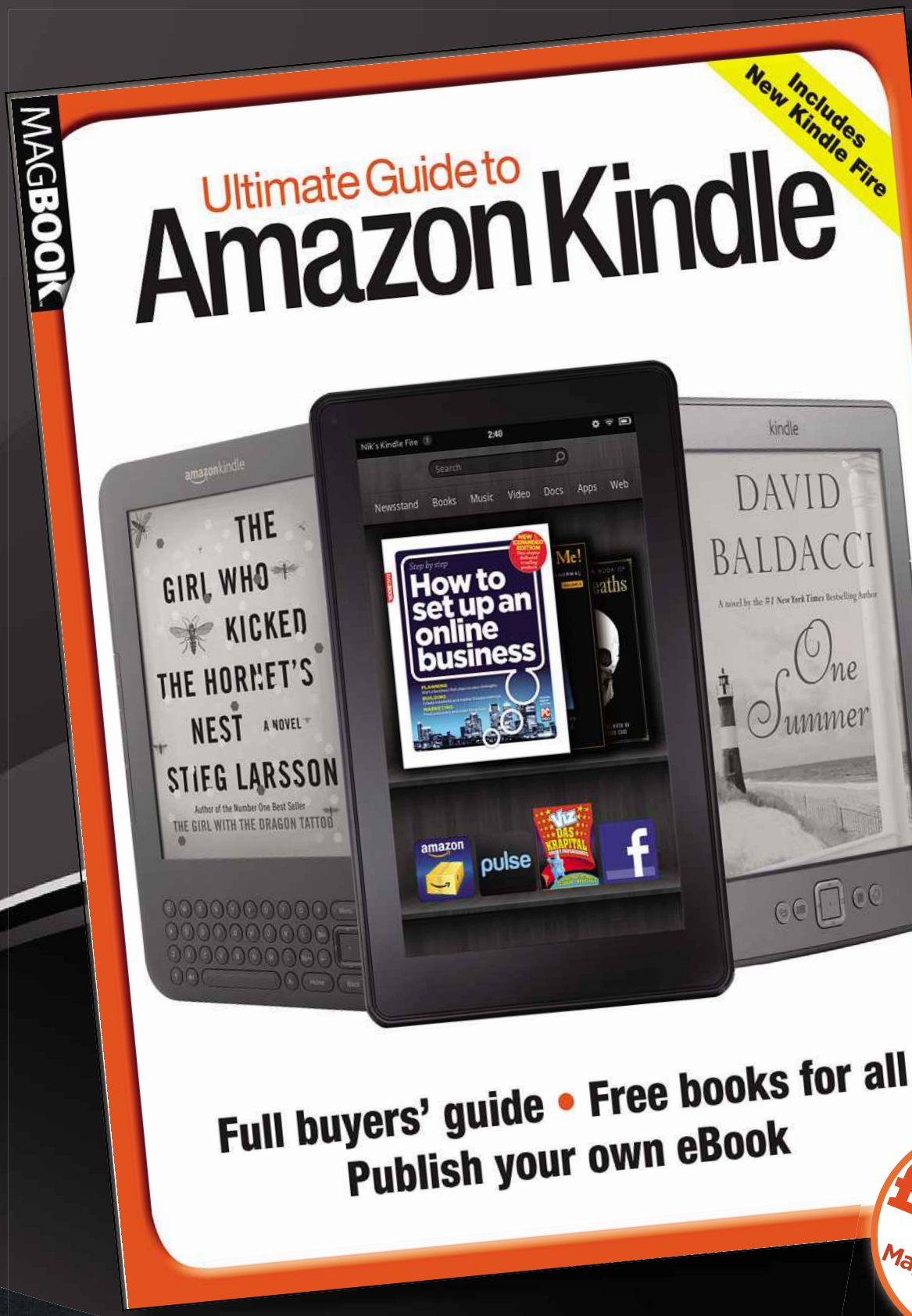

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PHENOMENOMIX

Austin Osman Spare....part 1

HUNT EMERSON & KEVIN JACKSON

IN OCCULTIST CIRCLES NOWADAYS, AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE IS REGARDED AS PERHAPS THE MOST INFLUENTIAL 20TH CENTURY OCCULTIST – APART FROM CROWLEY!

THIS IS SURPRISING... FOR ONE THING, SPARE WAS BORN WITHIN THE SOUND OF BOW BELLS – AND SO WAS AN AUTHENTIC COCKNEY!

GORBLIMEY, STRIKE A LIGHT – WOTCHER COCK... APPLES AND PEARS... GERTCHA...
OSMAN SPARE, OSMAN SPARE, E'LL DO ANYFINK FOR A DARE...
JELLIED EELS
CHAS & DAVE

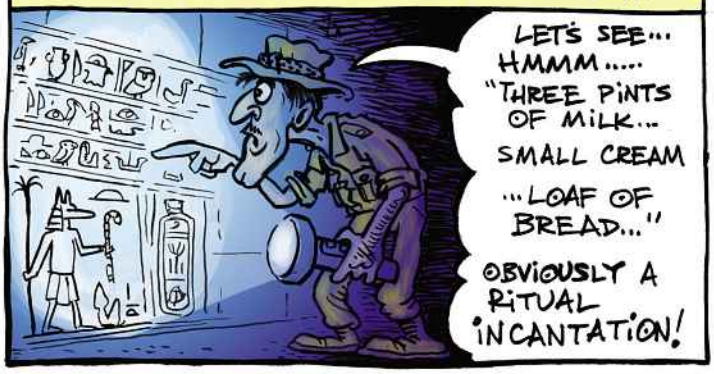
HE SPENT MOST OF HIS LATER LIFE IN ABJECT POVERTY, ACCOMPANIED ONLY BY HIS BELOVED STRAY CATS...

HE WAS A KEEN SUPPORTER OF THE RSPCA, AND PROUDLY WORE THEIR BADGE AT ALL TIMES...

THESE LONG YEARS OF POVERTY WERE A TERRIBLE COME-DOWN AFTER A YOUTH FULL OF ADVENTURES... SPARE HAD MANY STRANGE MAGICAL EXPERIENCES – HE CLAIMED TO HAVE SPOTTED, AND CHASED, A SATYR IN FLEET STREET...

HE HAD BEEN THE ONLY SURVIVOR OF A TORPEDOED TROOP SHIP IN WORLD WAR ONE...

HE HAD STUDIED HIEROGLYPHICS IN EGYPT...



HE CLAIMED THAT HITLER HAD COMMISSIONED HIM TO PAINT AN OFFICIAL PORTRAIT...

HE ALSO CLAIMED THAT SIGMUND FREUD HAD SENT HIM A FAN LETTER...

SO – JUST WHO EXACTLY WAS THIS COLOURFUL COCKNEY?

MORE NEXT TIME!

COMING NEXT MONTH

SNOWMAN'S LAND

RUSSIAN YETIS, PAKISTANI APEMEN AND BIGFOOT DNA

VAMPIRES OF ATLANTIS

SEARCHING FOR SECRETS ON THE ISLAND OF SANTORINI

+

LAKELAND BEAST, CEMETERY DOGS, KISSING BUGS AND MUCH MORE...

FORTEAN TIMES 298

ON SALE 31 JANUARY

HUGO PIETTE

TALES FROM THE VAULT

EACH MONTH WE SEND *FORTEAN TIMES* FOUNDER BOB RICKARD DOWN INTO THE DARKEST, COBWEB-RIDDEN DEPTHS OF THE VAULTS OF FORTEAN TOWERS IN SEARCH OF STORIES FROM *FT*'S PAST.

FEBRUARY 1973

A young couple waited two years for an apartment of their own. Soon after they moved in, ghostly phenomena started: objects falling, bumps and knocking sounds and the feeling of a "strange presence" nearby. Marie McFadden, 27, said she first noticed a face looking at her through the glass kitchen door in their Scunthorpe council house. Then, "a young boy with curly hair… walked across the room and straight through a window". She even saw the sofa depress beside her as though someone had just sat down. Her mother, on visits, was frequently disturbed. Worse, the couple's four-year-old son, deaf and dumb, would wake up, "screaming, trembling, pale-faced". Husband Stephen, a confessed sceptic, testified to the mysterious sounds and said neighbours told of seven families before them leaving in unexplained circumstances. The frightened McFaddens were pleading to be rehoused. **FT3:11**

FEBRUARY 1983

158 years ago, parts of Devon woke up to find lines of hoof-like 'prints' in snow, tracking across roofs, roads and fields for miles. It's a mark of the superstitious fear this anomaly engendered in countryfolk that the case is still known as 'The Devil's Footprints'. It was remembered this month by a letter in the *Daily Mirror*, explaining that it was a feat of trickery performed by Romanies on stilts to warn off their rivals, "the Didikais and Pikies". This was confirmed a few days later by another letter saying that this was the reason that Romanies call the 8th February 'the Night the Mulo Walks'; 'Mulo' being their word for the Devil. Additional corroboration comes from 1973 book, *In the Life of a Romany Gypsy*, by Manfri Wood, one of the last Welsh Gypsies fluent in old Romani. **FT39:16**

This month saw French folklorists Michel Meurger and his Montreal-based colleague Claude Gagnon deep into their survey of the lakes of Quebec, cataloguing those that had monster legends attached. Due to limitations on time and budget, they had to stop when they had accumulated 50 such, which still left a large part of the state 'undiscovered'. Their findings – set out in *Monstres des Lacs du Quebec* (1982), then translated, revised and expanded as *Lake Monster Traditions* (1988) – revealed a chaotic situation. The monsters reported were mainly of six main types (Serpent-like; Horse-headed; Seal-like; 'Living Trunk'; Giant Fish; and 'Upturned Boat'). Many of the small lakes could not have sustained a viable population of any of these monsters; yet one (the Lac Saint-François) had four of these types co-existing, according to witnesses. Upon this 'impossible' foundation Meurger built his theory of 'mythical landscapes' that are constructed from psychosocial and cultural elements as a suitable environment for the dream-like creatures to inhabit. Meurger, 'The Jabberwocks of Quebec'. **FT46:40-43**

FEBRUARY 1993

In *FT* we often feature stories for which folklorists have redefined the word 'ostension' to mean a seemingly 'true' occurrence of a trope usually considered folklore, particularly the modern kind often vouched for by a 'friend-of-a-friend'. We told of a Hungarian couple who bought a 'stray puppy' at the Polish Market in Budapest. They took it to a vet for vaccinations and complained that it was vicious and had a voracious appetite. The vet, apparently without difficulty, identified it as "a polar bear cub". Our sources report this as an actual occurrence, but it conforms to the urban legend known as 'The Mexican Pet' (in which an American couple buy a giant shaved rat believing it to be a puppy). **FT69:8**

FEBRUARY 2003

By all accounts Father Mychal Judge, 68, the Franciscan chaplain to the NY fire service, was a remarkable man; and the formation of a cult around him is no less remarkable. 'Father Mike', as he was known, became international news when he entered the city's World Trade Center on 11 September 2001. He died with the trapped firemen to whom he was administering the Last Rites. Millions watched on TV as his body was tenderly recovered, and more than 6,000 New Yorkers turned up for his funeral. His cult began almost immediately with a street, a song, a ferry and many babies named after him. His tomb in New Jersey has become a focus for pilgrimages and a website promoting the canonisation of Father Mike carries reports of 'miracles' attributed to his intercession, including a number of babies in remission from serious illnesses. That he was a homosexual and recovering alcoholic have proved no obstacle; on the contrary, say his supporters, they mark him as "a man of our time". **FT170:6**

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By Marian Ashcroft

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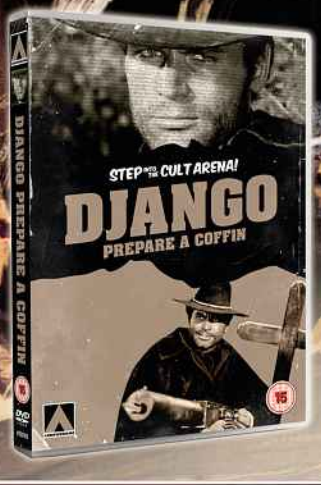

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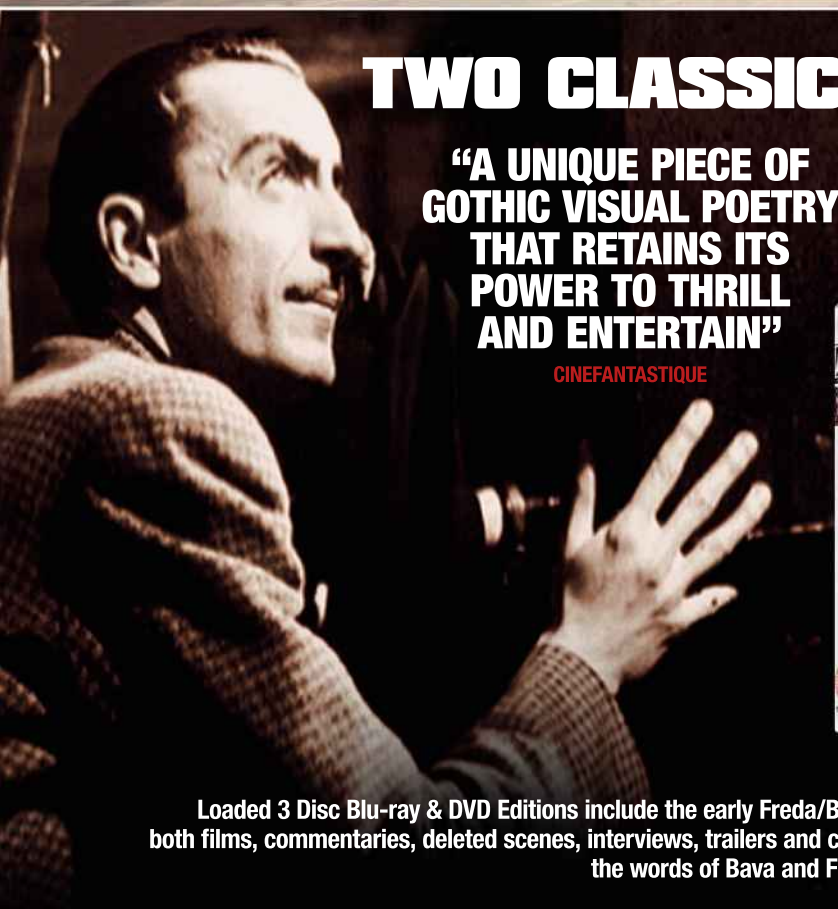

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